

Jonathan Miles, *A Flash Of Intensity: Mustafa Hulusi*, Next Level Magazine, Edition 01, Vol.5, Summer 2006, Pp. 24 - 27

Text: Jonathan Miles

A FLASH OF INTENSITY: MUSTAFA HULUSI

Mustafa called to ask me to visit his studio. I told him that he was always on my mind. This is not a love thing, but rather the fact that everyday I pass his name on Hackney Road on my way home. His name is on my mind; it circulates in space, almost like a mantra or even a vestige whose source is in any image, which is no longer present.

I wonder if the name, or the name and product, or image is a hard kernel of the vestige of art, what Jean-Luc Nancy described as "both an evanescent trace and an almost ungraspable fragment."¹ This is a paradoxical state in that an attribute of a trace can, as hard kernel, be properly understood or digested. I think that Mustafa is interested in what kind of stomach we have.

Kant had made a distinction between two types of beauty: free beauty and dependent beauty. One of the main attributes of beauty relative to the object is that the perceiving subject should take immediate pleasure in that object and that in turn it pleases universally and without pre-determination. This pleasure though is not cognitive, hence the notion of 'mindless pleasure'. Free beauty is 'self-subsisting' because the object in question is devoid of any intrinsic meaning or end whereas with dependent beauty we are in some way conscious of an ability to refer to some concept of the object. This distinction in Kant is not so much a distinction between different types of objects, such as a flower in the case of free beauty and a fine building such as in the case of dependent beauty, but rather the different orientations of the subject. Throughout his meditations on aesthetics we can understand that Kant is attempting to refine the ways in which the relationship between the subject and the object can be understood. For instance, defined in these terms the theory of the sublime is also a theory of the subject at its very limit.

Returning to this series, it appears to both be exploring notions relating to the perception of beauty and the moment. There is an intense feeling of now-ness and with it the loss of mediation, or in some way that which occurs within the glance of the eye. This depiction of the moment serves as the (suspended?) entry point. This sense of suspension creates a feeling of an edge – we might either elect to treat this work as an authentic representation embodying the beautiful, or as an inauthentic gesture, in which case we might start to consider issues relating to kitsch or mass culture. This ambiguity is heightened because the works themselves mobilise a relationship between the photographic fragment and the printed billboard. In some respects all three spaces are conjoined in ways that are both spatial and temporal because the works themselves appear to

mobilise a succession of things, such as the suspended moment, absorption, repetition, direct sensation, the fragment and temporal mediation.

Socrates, in summarising his dialogue on beauty, said, "all beauty is difficult." I think that these works are more inclined towards being difficult rather than beautiful because they divide how one might feel and think. In this respect they mobilise a sense of irony. They gesture toward singularity but then this gesture is withdrawn.

In her book *World Spectators* Kaja Silverman states that the "world 'intends' toward being seen; it aspires or moves toward appearance". If this is the case, then it reverses the categories of seeing and being seen by structuring intentionality within the perceptual object that initiates the scopical interaction. This idea leads Silverman to define appearance as "a definitionally aesthetic event" and this in turn leads towards a conclusion that the "world becomes beautiful or wonderful only when we sculpt our void in its image." In effect, a form of opposition connects the human subject and the world because we define our essence through knowledge. I think that these works stage an appearance in order to indicate not the emptiness of the image but rather a vacuum that resides in the desire to know.

Everything is loaded and heavy, saturated by politics relating to the idea of some kind of finality (the end of history, the death of art, the implosion of the social and so on). Jean-Luc Nancy talks of how "we find ourselves sensibly and physically outside ourselves, outside the blind slipping away of our time"² as the counterpoint of historical passage and destiny. I start to think that the gesture within these works is toward aesthetic abandonment, or at least of stepping into that zone in which abandonment is both simultaneously bliss and despair.

As an overall work they are empty and full, beautiful and kitsch, heavy and light, clever and dumb, fast and slow, political and aesthetic, visual and conceptual, close and distant, feminine and masculine, simple and complex. They are thus an edge, which blurs the reasons and basis of distinction because we have collectively lost the measure of such things. Intuitively I feel that this in turn implicates a new way of understanding the nature of the subject, which for Mustafa is not sustained with purposes designed by reason, but within the flash of intensity.

¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Muses*, Stanford, 1996, P.81.

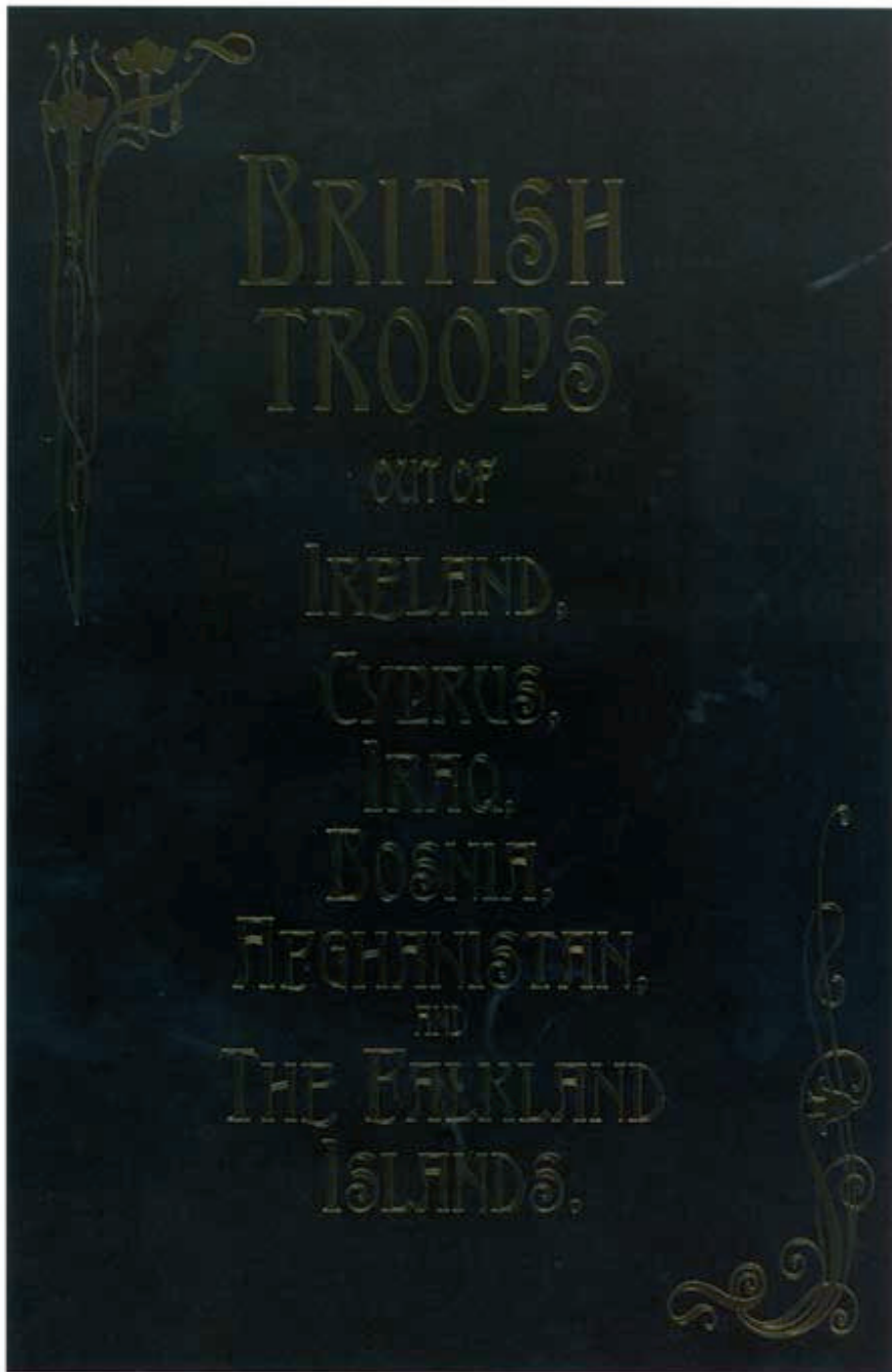
² Jean-Luc Nancy, *A Finite Thinking*, Stanford, 2003, P.301.

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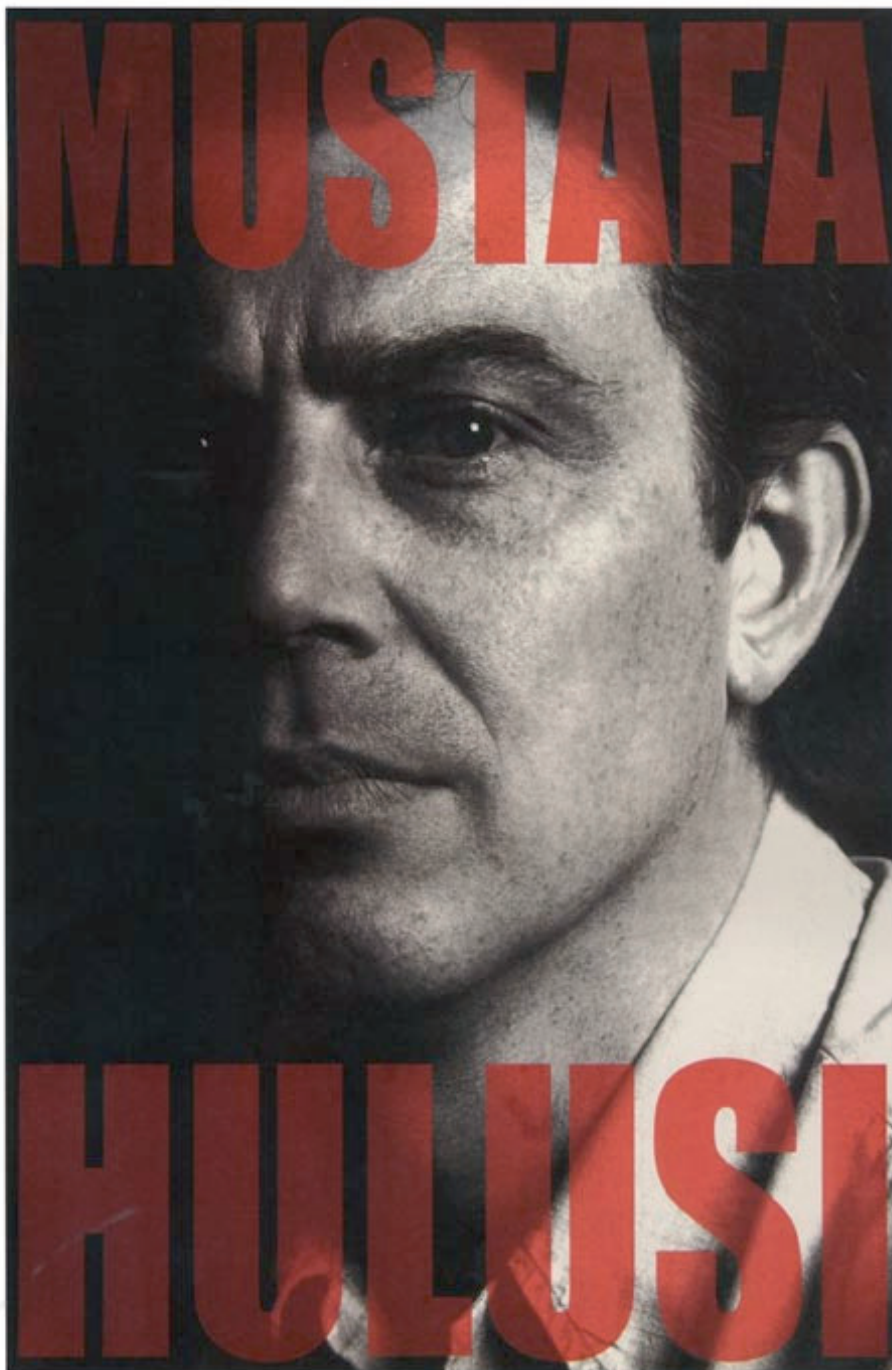
HULUSI

Untitled
Green and White Dove is part of an outdoor art project using various sized billboards as hybrid, fictionalised political party posters quoting domestic Turkish political party designs.



British Troops Out
2004
Block foil aluminium on woven paper
76.2cm x 50.8cm

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Phoney Tony
2004
Lithographic print on somerset paper
76.2cm x 50cm

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