Dazzle Camouflage Hides Corporate Logos in Optical Illusions

During World War I, Allied forces painted their battleships in dazzle camouflage. These “dazzle strips” were meant to disorient enemy from grazing speed, direction, and size from a distance. In addition to inspiring Ortho/Equine’s Camouflage in the Ovee (2006) highly-untraditional 16-bit experimental electronic album, Dazzle, dazzle camouflage has also had a major influence on Brooklyn-based multimedia artist Vandana Jain.

Jain, whose work ranges from installations and embroidery to painting and architectural models, also has a thing for taking aim at corporations and their logos. Her latest installation, Dazzle, is set to appear at Smack Mellon gallery as part of this weekends Smack Mellon’s Art Market. With Dazzle, Jain takes the visual vocabulary of dazzle strips—the disorienting effects and optical illusions caused by their patterned paintjobs—and uses it with the high-profile symbols of corporate logos.

“Dazzle came really especially interesting [to me] that we were rendered useless with the invention of war,” Jain told The Creative Review. “At the time I made the first work, I was already working with the language of corporate logos; I was just very interested in imagery that was generic or graphic, where the design lives within a larger nation of symbols that exist in everyday планист. I thought of corporate logos as a type of invisibility or cloakage, meaning that the dazzle camouflage pattern would be the perfect visual and conceptual accompaniment for her installation.”

The first works involved single panels of tape on a wall. Ranging from 5′8" to 9′12", they were composed of one logo intersected within itself several times. Each portion was filled with a different directional shading. There was a lion, which is the brand for Oreheo Group (a German food distributer) in blue paint jobs, and a pink unicorn—representing a British pharmaceutical company's treatment.

To pull off the Smack Mellon installation, Jain used a projector to transfer the original drawings to gallery walls. The tape was laid in sections, then cut, re-cut, and cut again. Some sections required two or three passes to complete, she noted.

For Smack Mellon, I’m expanding this idea to fill all four walls of the gallery. From four to ceiling, over 80 linear feet at 12’ high,” Jain said. “Rather than working with single panels of color, I am using multiple colors and gradient patterns. Both the lion and the unicorn make an appearance, along with some hearts, hands, and an eye, a nod to yogi figure with calling circles, and a construction of abstractions.”

“Vandana Jain’s ‘Dazzle’ installation will be on view at Smack Mellon from September 27 - November 9.

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