

Dear viewers, visitors and friends,

Tracking with the practice of Arash over the past six months has been a wonderful pleasure, and a real gift amid the abstract and often heavy work of a PhD dissertation write-up. Arash's insatiable drive to find his way into images *through* the materials that compose them has been the perfect and gracious antidote to my piles of books and lofty ideas. The works push back, their frontality speaks the words 'try again'.

Our pairing for the residency was one of those art-world blind-dates, and we first met up in early January to see a group show of Arash's in Arnhem, the town where he grew up and lives. The show was called 'WELL... HERE'S ANOTHER HOT MESS I'VE GOTTEN MYSELF INTO', and it was every bit the irreverent and raucous gesture of its title. Every single thing that you could do with a show was done. Climb a ladder to see the work? Yep. All manner of media working in all exploded ways? Indeed. A bizarre signature drink in the gallery cafe? Of course! As we left, I told Arash that it reminded me of that pop-song about crashing a car into a bridge and watching it somehow both burn and sink, with the chorus "I don't care, I love it!"

A few weeks after arriving in Tilburg at the residency LeoXIII, Arash wrote through that he'd figured out his direction for the work. Not only that, he sent through a lengthy and thoughtful praecis outlining his ideas. The residency neighbourhood had reminded him of the one in which he'd grown up in Arnhem, Geintenkamp. He wrote:

"Walking around these streets and the city I got fascinated by the windows and the decoration that in some cases one really questions if the windows are decorated for the person inside the house or the person passing by. These windowsills that seem carefully curated with objects resemble a sort of decorated urban shrine wherein you (for a split second) are taken in the interests, the psyche, the ordinance of people living behind the walls."

As a foreign curator who had long bent my thought and effort to deciphering a Dutch aesthetics, I was so envious. Of course I'd vaguely had these same thoughts so often, walking the streets, my absent-minded attention captured by these curious window installations that stand as a kind of generous decoy to what lies behind. They offer such a singular and revealing disclosure of the double-binds—the smoke and mirrors—of the famed Dutch tradition of 'transparency' and its *dispositif* of interior and exterior. They invite a look 'into' that is suspended and foreclosed. As Arash so well points out, the meditative motifs that they often present – of buddhas for example – are the perfect floating signifier of psychological interiority offered up as deceptive screen of surface.

When I caught up with Arash again, in late May, the work was well underway. A series of replica windows were under construction alongside the ongoing practice of epoxy composite drawings in compressed plastic shards, and with two newer elements of cyanotype textile prints and comical astro-turf hedge-units, autonomously assembled on wheels. We looked at the visual diaries that informed the work, and talked about the long-term artistic questions that drive the work. How to trace images through material and virtual worlds? How to stage sculptural frontality as an image itself? How to artistically cognize the truths of acculturation, and political climates, without becoming their servant?

The exhibition, *Curtains*, takes up the curious, entertaining, and utterly profound mise-en-scene of these window displays as a reversal at the heart of this practice. Arash wants us to look at the curtains, and therein to see the real show.

Curtains, all the way down.

Sincerely,

Vivian Zisherl