

Happy-go-lucky

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Happy Lucky is the name of the exhibition being mounted by Dubai gallery Art Sawa (Mar. 17 – Apr. 16) on Robert Hammond’s newest iteration of his Visual Ritual conception. Hammond explores contemporary allegories through the mechanics of modern interfaces and the modern visual realm.

While most wall art is about surface, his work is intentionally about reflection. Accents of light travel across chamfered edges where metal and glass meet. Precision-engineered surfaces transform smiling faces of glass and steel into sumptuous simple motifs combined to obtain whimsical harmonies and resonances - isolating our perception to naivety, pattern, surfaces, textures and reflection and their relations.

In place of brush or pencil – Hammond’s art is drawn with thick 5-7cm metal profiles. The materials are all glossy and reflective - polished steel is inlaid and engineered into thick acrylic - creating flush surfaces - producing compound objects 7cm deep - that make up a whole. Distilling beauty from astute simplicity, bringing order to complexity, the works reflect the modern urban world around us.

Elementary shapes, symbols, and smiling faces, are combined to obtain whimsical harmonies and resonances - isolating our perception to patterns, surfaces, textures and reflection and their relations.

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patterns, surfaces, textures and reflection and their relations

Since his emergence, Hammond has transformed Pop Art, Conceptual, and Appropriation Art with craft-making and popular culture to create his own unique aesthetic. In his work, the hand of the artist is always once removed, leaving his art to stand apart of human character and touch.

Hammond's artworks rarely inspire passive responses; this is one sign of the importance of his accomplishment - his art holds up a mirror to contemporary iconography, and familiar commercial aesthetics in search of an art he makes his own.

Born in 1968 in the UK of Lebanese descent, Hammond lives and works Beirut. He studied Fine Art at St Martins and WSCAD in the UK. His early works are painterly compositions in the neo-expressionist tradition. His latest works bring forth new material, coupled with a new aesthetic – something like a visual ritual.

With a powerful and rich sense of the visual, in a short time Hammond has become one of the most highly regarded and exciting new artist around. He has developed an extremely personal style that has tempered facility, virtuosity and surprise. Hammond's works have been noted to exhibit a sense of order - interfaces that signal with an assortment of visual qualities he makes his own.

In his wall sculptures, large cartoon faces and figures, outlined by thick curved metal profiles, contain montaged imagery behind polished glass surfaces. At first look whimsical and cute, yet again on second look you are peering through these figures into pulsating montages of dripping paint, concentric line patterns and smeared chalk.

At play is a marriage of optical patterns, corrugated space and unfocused images. It is in the playful mastery of lines that the power of his art lies. His works are essentially metal line drawings, extruded into the 3rd dimension - at times concentric, converging and diverging, at times kaleidoscopic.

Hammond's art is about strengthening our perception to everyday images, textures and reflection, emphasising their curious properties by singling them out and playing them off against one another. His compositions are deliberate, sparing, virtuosic and concise - cool and without context.

One can't ignore the reflective quality of his works. Deliberately highly reflective - the art jumps beyond the surface - shining back to the viewer, testing his retina



viewer, testing his retina.

His works overall exhibit a visual bravado mixed with new visual lucidities that brings facility and whimsy to large bright and powerful compositions.

Here he expands on his oeuvre.

How were you first exposed to art?

I was introduced at school at around the age of 13 - where we were given clay from which to create anything we wanted. From there I also learned to paint. Both my parents encouraged me.

Tell us about your educational background, as well as your personal background?

My parents, both Lebanese, moved to England in 1962, I was born and raised in Windsor, just outside of London. I studied Fine Art at St Martins and WSCAD

What was your first exhibition and where?

My first solo exhibition was at the SMO gallery in Beirut in 2012.

What is the inspiration behind your work?

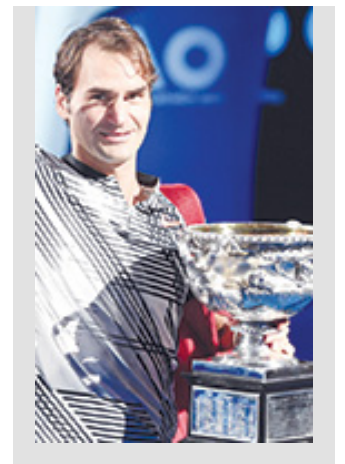
My current motivation revolves around interacting with the way we physically see, and how we respond emotionally to the visual. I believe one can directly stimulate the eye using line, illusion, pattern, and reflection.

What are the messages you convey through your art?

I don't have messages – my art is about offering visual stimulation and pleasure.

Tell us about your current exhibition?

“Happy lucky” is a continuation of my exploration into the aesthetic I have established for myself, where in place of brush or pencil, my art is



made with thick 5-7cm metal profiles. The materials are all glossy and reflective - polished steel is inlaid and engineered into thick acrylic - creating flush surfaces – producing compound objects 7cm deep – that make up a whole.

While most wall art is about surface, my work is intentionally about reflection. Accents of light travel across chamfered edges where metal and glass meet. Precision-engineered surfaces transform smiling faces of glass and steel into sumptuous simple motifs combined to obtain whimsical harmonies and resonances. The idea of luck is introduced by way of popular symbols pertaining to luck.

How did you select the works for this exhibition?

When I start to work, I establish a general set of strong ideas that I believe will have resonance - then I work toward making them exceptional. Inevitably they end up having a common theme - which only then requires a pertinent title as a whole.

When you choose works for a show in Dubai, are they different than works for the shows in another country?

No, when it comes to how we physically see and what stimulates us - we are the same everywhere. Dubai is a special place however - it is now firmly established as a global major point of reference - one which I as an artist am greatly motivated to want to be a part of and contribute to.

You appropriate icons from local, regional, and international contexts. Do you envision these having different meanings/messages in each context?

I try and make my work as free of geographical reference as possible – which is a real challenge. I don't want viewers to have an emotional response to things from across geographic boundaries – these only get in way of what I am try to do – i.e. interact with the way we physically see,

How do you envision your future life as an artist?

I look forward to increasing my output – as I have many more ideas than I have time to produce.

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