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## To 'Err' Is Perfect: A Perfect Human at Dorsch Gallery



By David Rohn

The current offering at Dorsch Gallery is a thoughtful group show called 'A Perfect Human.' Curated by Milena Hoegsberg (a curator from Denmark who works in New York) and Megha Ralapati (a curator from Chicago who lives and works in New York where she directs a gallery and specializes in contemporary from Southeast Asia and the Diaspora) the at-first-glance sparse (6-artist) show spreads out nicely in Dorsch Gallery's vast space; in fact you really can't see more than 2 or 3 works from any point in the gallery.

Jorgen Leth's film, 'The Perfect Human' projected large on a gallery wall dominates the show and, as the oldest piece from which the exhibition's title is derived, it seems to be the key work in the show. The film quality is high-contrast black and white reminiscent of the late '60's when it was made and the simple sensuality of this piece is mesmerizingly fresh but in fact it really is from another time: Maybe a few years from now we will feel that Obama our Kennedy or Afghanistan our Vietnam, but for now it all looks a lot different from the 'GO-GO Years'. Even so, this film is a reminder that a return to the openness and optimism of times past is possible. And references to that time suggest that it is a time people now romanticize about and would like to return to; especially some of the people who lived it and now recall it with simplistic idealism.

The video by Chinese artist Zhao Bandi is a lot less idealistic and more in tune with the ironic, not-sp-idealistic art we're more used to nowadays. A kind of do it yourself opening Olympic Torch marathon and ceremony, it's an irreverent look at Chinese nationalism and maybe the implied rejection of authority. It really is part of a 'humanistic' world view that fits in with the protest movements of the late '60's.

The Olympic Games originally represented the Greek ideal of human athletic/physical perfection. In the case of China, the presentation of the games became an opportunity to present itself as the perfect emerging world power, with nationalism being about the perfect 'group' of humans. The video is really most impressive for having a cast of dozens and the fact that the artist was able to produce it using public locations for his production. In the US of course you can film wherever you want, but you'll need thousands of dollars to pay for government permits and to insure against liability. The perfect human exists in perfect freedom.

Also in the main gallery are a stack of self help books about as tall as a perfect human. It's by Martin Basher, called "The Hard Work of Simple Living" and seems a bit of a one-liner until you

start looking at the titles of all the self help books – the focus is on imperfection, the most glaring being ‘Obsession’! The piece is very funny and a great snapshot of our heroic efforts to be perfectly acceptable to ourselves and each other; and conversely of how un-accepting this seems to make us.

In the next room are three more pieces. One about diamonds (which are perfectly hard, good for playing old vinyl records, and perfect refractors of light) proports the notion that perfection of course is expensive too.

This piece, ‘Making A Record (Diamond) (2009) by Melissa Dubin and Aaron S. Davidson focuses on the dual aspects of the perfect traits of diamonds: hardness, which makes them industrially useful, and their physical beauty, which makes them aesthetically desirable. In a footnote the artists mention that diamonds are common although they are also famous for being expensive, which suggests that perfection, like beauty, may be in the eye of the beholder.

In the middle of this room is a rather simple/elegantly constructed cut-out of a human figure entitled ‘Green Screen’ by Sreshta Premnath . The negative space is suspended by a frame while the actual figure is defined by the cutting; umbilically attached to the fabric it drapes across the floor. Perfection, as in e perfect proportion of the Ancient Greek and Renaissance concern is what comes to mind. The figure being as it is still attached to the fabric from which it is (mostly) cut, the negative(silhouette) and positive (figure) are presented as inseparable from each other, drawing again the exhibitions thematic comparison between perfect and imperfect; in this case suggesting that what is ‘perfect’is defined by dividing it from what is not.

Michelangelo’s comment that ‘David was in the block of marble’, that he only released it because he saw it there, comes to mind. The piece is called ‘Green Screen’ and it’s by Sresta Premnath.

**In the corner of this room is a video called ‘The Living Room’ by Patrick McElnea. With it the viewer is taken on a busy and very personal tour through the professionally decorated rooms of his parents and friends’ homes, (including focal points of personal domestic pride: bathrooms and kitchens). The video is a long, but very entertaining tour of possible examples of perfect architecture, interior design and polite behavior, interspersed with bits of the artist humping the range hood of a ‘high end’ kitchen, lip-syncing a production number with 3 versions of himself superimposed onto the video frame, etc, etc.**



**It’s not the kind of video that would be described as ‘over-edited’ and seems to be more about the triumph of humor, impulsiveness and pathos over ‘perfection’. Whether that was the idea behind it’s inclusion in the show is hard to say, but it would be a mistake not to take in the whole video – the artist is irrepressible.**

So the show has humor, pathos, irony and social criticism, and exhibits a reference for times past. It repeatedly presents the notion of the 'Perfect Human' as an elusive idea that seems to inevitably bring up the notion of 'imperfection': the only piece that represents some kind of achievable notion of perfection seems to be the one that was made 40 years ago.

Of course, Judeo-Christian theologians are always reminding us that we are born imperfectly, with 'Original Sin.' Responses to this cross we all seem to bear take many forms including the Muslim weavers who make an intentional asymmetrical 'error' in their oriental carpets because 'only God is perfect' and readers and writers of self-help books whom often intone that 'you're exactly where you're supposed to be'. Are we to conclude then that socio-economic imperfection is 'our lot?' Apparently yes, but if we were to give up entirely at least taking a stab at 'perfection' things might be a lot worse [.]

For more information please visit: [www.dorschgallery.com](http://www.dorschgallery.com)