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Divine Wind: HK Zamani and The Reinvention of PØST

by Erin Sweeny | Sep 30, 2016



Gerald Giamportone Installation at PØST, 2016. Courtesy of HK Zamani.

In the spring of 2012, I was living in Los Angeles and on the hunt for a studio space. Responding to an ad for a studio sublet downtown, I had the good fortune of connecting with artist and curator [HK Zamani](#). Touring upstairs studios in the building he managed, I learned that the first floor also housed his own living space (shared with his partner, teacher/dancer/choreographer Emma Jürgensen) and a gallery on its front side. Zamani lightly spoke of artists and past exhibitions in the building, but it was only later that I became aware of the space's deep and influential history spanning two decades.

In the late 1980s, Iranian-born artist HK Zamani—then known as Habib Kheradyar—moved into a studio building on East Seventh Place in Downtown Los Angeles. The area, often considered part of Skid Row, was gritty, industrial and nearly void of art venues. Still, Zamani recognized the potential of unused space in the building, negotiating with his landlord to rent and build out the downstairs area as a destination gallery. POST opened with its first exhibition, a group painting show titled *Bumpy*, in the fall of 1995.

In the decades since, the experimental venue and curatorial project has proven to be a powerful force of support for the art community in Los Angeles. Aptly named, in part, for a number of structural posts located in the gallery, **POST** has also served as both support and marker in a myriad of ways. From thematic group shows to solo project spaces (including in the building's elevator), the project has hosted hundreds of exhibitions over the years and generated considerable critical attention for featured artists with reviews in publications ranging from the *LA Times* to *Art in America*. Unbound by traditional ideas about selling and collecting art in the gallery setting, Zamani also introduced an annual fundraiser known as the *\$100 Show*, splitting proceeds with artists in an effort to support both the space and its community.



HK Zamani. *Untitled #11*, 2015. Oil on canvas, 60 x 72". Courtesy of the artist.

HK Zamani is a well-respected artist in his own right, with an international exhibition record highlighting works in performance, painting, and sculpture. It makes sense that the genesis of POST was inspired by the desire to create a space with programming linked to a building that also housed his own studio. But beyond this, Zamani embraced PØST from the start as an experimental system. It has always been an organism in need of—as its mission statement reiterates—reconsideration, reinvention and growth. The history of the space is a testament to Zamani’s commitment; the arc of his own career reveals an artist who is equally dedicated to the thoughtful evolution of his own practice.

After ten years at POST, 2005 marked the beginning of a three-year hiatus from programming as the artist sought more time for his own interdisciplinary practice. It was during this time that he professionally adopted the name HK Zamani, symbolizing a new phase in his career. Returning to the project in 2008, he would make a similar gesture for PØST: the slash through the Ø designating its shift from past to present. *The Erased Exhibit* reopened the space that year with a curatorial action that “questioned everything in its proposal for a clean slate.” The works included in the show were painted white in a performative gesture by Zamani—giving birth to a series of “Kamikaze” (translated as “divine wind” in Japanese) shows that set the tone for a new era.

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Kim Abeles Installation at PØST, 2016. Courtesy of HK Zamani.

Zamani recognizes the profound influence that PØST has had on his own artistic practice. From 2008–2015, programming shifted to focus on one month of these [Kamikaze Shows](#), in which thirty-one individual shows were staged for each day in the month of July. The yearly endurance effort also became a performance project; I witnessed these efforts firsthand the summer after I moved into the building. The buzz was constant as I watched a steady flow of artists and work move through the space each day to prepare for an opening every evening of the month, bolstered by a large community of artists and supporters that came to check out the work. Zamani was omnipresent: organizing, hosting, and personally documenting each exhibition before it came down. I also curated and featured work in one of the Kamikaze shows that July, personally feeling both the anxiety and excitement of coordinating a group of artists to mount and deinstall an exhibition in one day. It truly felt rooted in, as Zamani stated, “the idea of abandon and sacrifice, of making art and sharing it.”

In recent years, DTLA (as downtown Los Angeles is locally known) has been gentrifying at a dizzying pace, [bringing a new wave of galleries, artist-run spaces and creative energy](#) to an area that was once an art desert. Amidst this wave of development, PØST has recalibrated once again. Forced to move in 2015 due to rising rents, Zamani left the building after twenty-six years, and twenty years of PØST. “We’ve had to celebrate its twentieth anniversary with *PØST Ghost*, an imaginary exhibit,” he said.¹



Kamikazes at PØST, Summer 2012. Courtesy of the author.

But in keeping with the spirit of the project, Zamani also embraces this move as another opportunity for reinvention and growth. Coincidentally, plans were already underway to shift PØST to a non-profit model with fiscal sponsorship from [Fractured Atlas](#). A new space was secured in the historic Bendix Building located west of downtown. Zamani’s curatorial approach in this new phase is to “reintroduce active artists who have either intentionally removed themselves from the gallery system, or inadvertently have been outside of it.”

Earlier this year, the gallery presented its first exhibition in their new location featuring the work of [Kim Abeles](#), whose last solo exhibition in Los Angeles was at Santa Monica Museum in 1993. Their current exhibition, featuring the work of [Gerald Giamportone](#), touches upon themes of altered perception and changed identity by an artist who works with opposing concepts of temporality and timelessness. Now in its twenty-first year of programming, the gallery remains an organic support system that embraces similar concepts. Guided by HK Zamani’s introspective and innovative approach, PØST demonstrates its ability to keep moving with the shifting tides.

1. Excerpt from an interview with HK Zamani, August 21, 2016.

A solo exhibition of Gerald Giamportone’s work is on display at PØST’s new Bendix Building location through October 1, 2016. Upcoming exhibitions include a curatorial project by Shagha Ariannia and a two-person show featuring Melvino Garretti and Joe Ray.

HK Zamani’s work is currently being featured in a solo exhibition entitled Past, Present, Future. at [Long Beach City College](#), running from September 8 through October 6, 2016.

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Sweeny joined ART21 in 2012 as a contributor to the “Praxis Makes Perfect” column. Hailing from the Pacific Northwest, she holds an MFA from the Cranbrook Academy of Art; her work investigates the shifting values of place, history and objecthood in an increasingly mobile society. She was recently an Education Fellow at the Wassaic Project, and has also been an artist-in-residence at ACRE and Ox-Bow. She is currently developing The Landing, an organization inspired by the physical dimensions of a post office box, and defines walking as a core tenet of her practice. Sweeny now contributes “The New Situationists” column. She lives and works in Brooklyn.