



HK ZAMANI

Edifice/Oedipus

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Stanislaus State Art Space

March 9–May 3, 2023



DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

HK Zamani's – *Edifice/Oedipus*, represents a chance to view his astonishing work. It is interesting how paths cross and how exhibitions come together. A little over thirty years ago, I was fortunate enough to attend an open studio and installation art exhibition night at Claremont Graduate University. I was a student at Cal Poly Pomona taking a gallery management class. One of the requirements was to observe how galleries exhibit installation art. The exhibition was in the main gallery and the MFA students' studios. These were excellent exhibitions, but what really caught my eye was the incredible painting that was taking place in the department at that time. In particular, was one artist whose paintings were like magic to me. HK Zamani's use of different mediums, the history of his painting and the symbolic meanings that I observed in his work really made it clear that he was a very special artist.

Luckily, a little over a year later I began studying at Claremont Graduate University and got to know Zamani. I observed his work progress and was memorized as I observed the progression and evolution of his work. Through the years I have continued to follow this very talented artist. Many years have gone by, but I have never forgotten that first encounter with his work. But that was not my last encounter with Zamani's work.

A few years ago my colleague, Dr. Staci Gem Scheiwiller, joined our department of art at California State University, Stanislaus. Dr. Scheiwiller, was also educated in the Los Angeles area and we had a lot of similar experiences with art and different artists. I shared HK Zamani's work with Dr. Scheiwiller and she had an instant appreciation for his work. She composed the catalog essay for this exhibition. Her impressions and appreciation for Zamani's work only add to the already exceptional exhibition.

I am very excited to have a body of HK Zamani's artwork here in our gallery. I am also very grateful to Dr. Scheiwiller for her wonderful catalog essay. I hope others will enjoy both of their efforts.

I would like to thank the many colleagues that have been instrumental in presenting this exhibition. HK Zamani for the chance of exhibiting his work, Dr. Staci Gem Scheiwiller for recommending HK Zamani's exhibition and writing the catalog essay, Brad Peatross of the School of the Arts, California State University, Stanislaus for the catalog design and Parks Printing for the printing this catalog.

I would also like to extend many thanks to the Instructionally Related Activities Program of California State University, Stanislaus, as well as anonymous donors for the funding of the exhibition and catalogue. Their support is greatly appreciated.



Dean De Cocker, Director
University Art Gallery
California State University, Stanislaus

A PHANTASMAGORIA OF OWLS: SHADOWS AND LAYERS IN HK ZAMANI'S ARTWORK

By Staci Gem Scheiwiller

The artist HK Zamani stands next to his artwork *Inadvertent Protagonists V* (2022). Two black shapes emerge from the artwork, while the artist himself dressed in black with a mask appears as a third shape, with all three forms "shadowing" or mirroring one another. The three forms are strangely similar, rendering them somewhat indistinguishable, and all three are visually connected in an unsettling relationship. This interaction is much like that of Sadeq Hedayat's novella *The Blind Owl* (1937), in which two male protagonists, who at once seem as different subjectivities, become entwined and entangled, with both men (or the same man) confessing to their shadow that has turned into the shape of an owl. All three are one, but this merging only makes their ontological existences more unstable, unknowable, unclear, and surreal, hence the blindness that emerges.

In HK Zamani's exhibition *Edifice/Oedipus*, the oeuvre presents prominently these shadow-like figures, including the artist himself in the performance artwork *Blind Owl* (2022). Just like the shadowy figure of the owl in Hedayat's work is a reflection of the protagonist (or protagonists), the silhouettes in these artworks connect and dialogue with one another but then also become reflections of viewers, forcing them to come to terms with the forms. In addition, these silhouettes act as traces of the artist, as he reveals them through the layers of his work, but these revelations only lead to more opacity and obscurity, as if a "true" meaning could not be reached (and mostly it cannot). Moreover, one could tie these shadows to the artist's thoughts, memories, and traumas, but what is interior is manifested exteriorly, and thus, these shadows also transform into images of the viewers, who have all become indistinguishable in a time of late capitalism.

In the artist's performance of *Blind Owl* (2022), Zamani cuts into *Inadvertent Protagonists V*, creating two triangular shapes (redacted pyramids) over the figures with swift guerrilla-like actions. The image of the masked artist slashing his canvas appears menacing, disturbing, and violent. In the second part of the performance, Zamani emerges in front of the artwork and reads his own poem inspired by Hedayat's work: "This morning's kill came with ease./And fresh blood justified it./The second was sloppy and took three attempts at intervals./Clearly greed made the prey heavy and around for the final call." After reciting the poem, the artist dedicated the performance to the people of Iran, especially the women, and called for a future that is female.

As indicated by the artist, the *Inadvertent Protagonists* series elicits dialogue on the duality of sculpture and painting. Indeed, the forms shown in *Inadvertent Protagonists* emerge from a subtractive process, which is typically associated with sculpture. The two dominant silhouettes appear facing each other as if really engaged in continuing this dialogue of duality that the materials and processes have already demonstrated. Hence, in the act of cutting and subtracting from the canvas, the process becomes one, and the forms mirror each other, so much so that the finite boundaries between these media dissipate. Moreover, by the artist slashing and revealing the artwork, the work itself becomes more amorphous as divisions are exposed although not necessarily reconciled, because there is still space between the forms. As the title suggests, the media are placed in opposition, but not of their own accord.

The violence in Zamani's poem indexes the violence that took place in the artistic process, making the artwork itself the "fresh kill." In connecting the work back to the novella by Hedayat (1903-51), two women in the story are murdered, thus rendering the process of slashing the artwork as rather gendered. Yet, the *Blind Owl* performance in front of *Inadvertent Protagonists V* is dedicated especially to the women of Iran, calling for a future that is female. This allegorical act appears to operate on several levels. The labor of ripping through various layers—be they psychological layers, the layers of an artwork, or the political fabrics of society—requires violence to break through. The assumption is though that once one breaks onto the other side, a certain clarity,

resolution, or enlightenment will take place when that is hardly ever the case. Oftentimes, circumstances only become muddier and perhaps even more absurd than they were previously. The liberation of women from violence is met with more brutal violence, and yet the initial state of the oppression of women lies in absurdity itself: "Clearly the greed made the prey heavy." The original novella was written in the 1930s during a time of dictatorship, and the book was initially banned. When one lives in a state of tyranny, truth and logic are dispensed with, and despair and madness take their place.

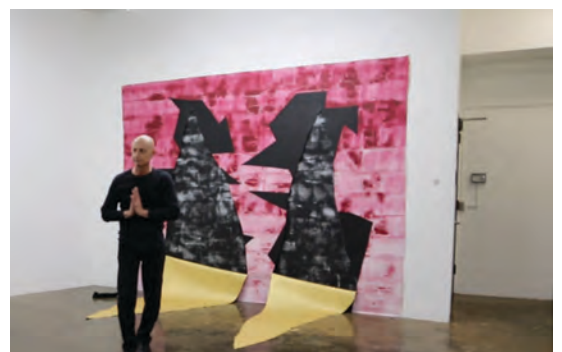
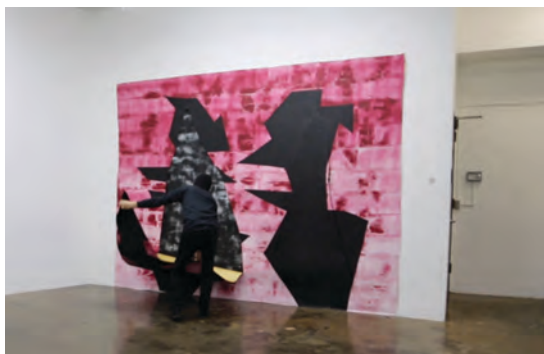
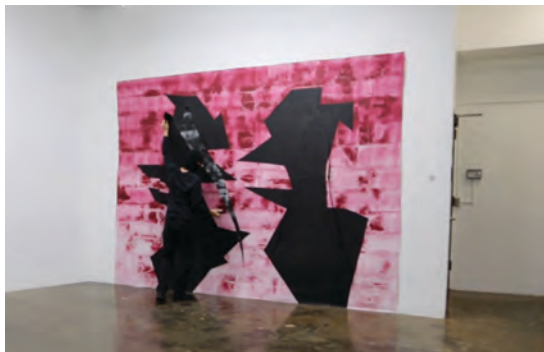
In the series *Fashion Erasures* (2022), what appear to be haute couture fashion advertisements, such as by Prada and Chanel, showcase more silhouetted, altered figures on a grid. In a rebellious act of détournement, the glamor and luxury of such advertisements and of the fashion they sell are mitigated by the shadow figures whose individuality and detail have been eliminated. Indeed, the figures appear ominous, even confrontational, especially ones that are in full-frontal poses. As images of subjects of late capitalism, they have lost their individual identities despite the promise of buying and consuming what one particularly desires. These consumers have become voids with only an ethereal, passing essence that does not have an ontological substance in the world. The images are like vignettes of Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), in which everyone and everything has turned into images to consume and be consumed. One no longer distinguishes between Self and Other (which are not strict dichotomies anyway); all exist in a phantasmagoria that is both terrifying and fleeting.

Some of these silhouetted models are transformed into larger works in the series *Edifice/Oedipus* (2022). The series title is interesting, as the word crossed out is "edifice," but "Oedipus" remains. "Edifice" could be a building—even a home—but it also could be a whole system of beliefs. Both a home and a set of beliefs are constructed, while "Oedipus" signals something more primal and instinctual. Oedipus Rex was a mythic king of ancient Thebes, on whom Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) based his theory of the Oedipus Complex. Freud theorized that a boy is in competition with his father for his mother's affections and thus latently wishes to kill his father or at least wants him dead and out of the picture. Although this theory is also a construct developed out of late nineteenth-century Viennese culture, the complex itself speaks of the connection between sexual desire and death in a collective consciousness that finds its worldly manifestation in various ways. The consumption of images and fashion in advanced capitalism deludes one into thinking that death is a far-off or unreal event, but the specter of death is always ever present.

In the series *Edifice/Oedipus* are shadow figures mirrored by the shapes that have been cutout, creating reflecting pools. They also look strangely similar to the silhouettes in the other series but not quite, such as the shapes in *Inadvertent Protagonists*, especially with the cut forms that drape down to reveal another layer beneath, thus uniting all the protagonists in the exhibition in one spooky phantasmagoria, in which all appear as projected ghostly shadows on the surfaces. The series *Edifice/Oedipus* is an attempt to shed light on the psyche of one lost to late capitalism, but once again, the viewer is confronted with opacity and obscurity instead of clarity. The layers themselves have been shaped and cut by socio-political forces that are not always possible to extricate. Much like the psychological complexes in one's mind, revealing one layer will certainly only lead to more. What might be in question is that the extent of depth might not be reachable, but there might not be much depth at all, since the shadow portends a sense of illusion and misperception. Probing deeper, one might find nothing at all—or one opens a valve of uncontrolled desire and violence.

All these artworks by Zamani in the exhibition portray the blind owl in some respect—as victims of traumas, of society, of dictatorship, and of late capitalism. But one must keep in mind that the blind owl is not simply a separate, foreign entity outside oneself yet also the shadow and projection of oneself. On some level, one can be the victim of one's own self-created oppressions that can be just as difficult to break from than the ones created by others. As the artworks have shown, there is not always a single, clear solution, answer, or direction presented to secure one's liberation from both inside and outside forces. The image is always the interface between the viewer and the "real," but as Zamani demonstrates, peeling back one layer does not expose the truth but only reveals yet another layer, another image to contend with.







Scan for video.

Blind Owl, 2022, performance duration: 3' 30", Band of Vices, Los Angeles, CA

Inadvertent Protagonists V, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 9 x 12 x 5 feet





Edifce/Oedipus I, 2022, mixed media on panel, 45 x 24 inches

Fashion Erasure I, 2022, india ink on found paper, 14 x 10 inches





Edifice/Oedipus 2, 2022, mixed media on panel, 45 x 24 inches

Fashion Erasure 2, 2022, india ink on found paper, 14 x 10 inches





Edifice/Oedipus 3, 2022, mixed media on panel, 45 x 24 inches

Fashion Erasure 3, 2022, india ink on found paper, 14 x 10 inches (Courtesy of Alan Standen)





Edifice/Oedipus 4, 2022, mixed media on panel, 45 x 24 inches

Fashion Erasure 4, 2022, india ink on found paper, 14 x 10 inches





Edifice/Oedipus 5, 2022, mixed media on panel, 45 x 24 inches

Fashion Erasure 5, 2022, india ink on found paper, 14 x 10 inches





Edifice/Oedipus 6, 2022, mixed media on panel, 45 x 24 inches

Fashion Erasure 6, 2022, india ink on found paper, 14 x 10 inches





Edifree/Oedipus 7, 2022, mixed media on panel, 45 x 24 inches

Fashion Erasure 7, 2022, india ink on found paper, 14 x 10 inches





Edifice/Oedipus 8, 2022, mixed media on panel, 45 x 24 inches

Fashion Erasure 8, 2022, india ink on found paper, 14 x 10 inches





Fashion Erasures 9-29, 2022, india ink on found paper, 14 x 10 inches (frames: 12.25 x 16.25 inches)





Edifice/Oedipus, installation, Stan State Art Space, 2023



HK ZAMANI CV

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 *Edifice/Oedipus*, Catalog, California State University Stanislaus, CA
- 2021 *Body and Immaterial*, Catalog, Museum of Art and History, Lancaster, CA
Protagonists and Erasures, Catalog, PRJCTLA, CA
- 2020 *Inadvertent Protagonists*, 515 Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2016 *Past, Present, Future*, LBCC Art Gallery, Long Beach, CA
- 2015 *No Abode*, MiM Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Around Black, Warschaw Gallery, San Pedro, CA
- 2013 *Remembering and Forgetting*, CBI Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Eros/Thanatos, DELETE, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Performing, Groundspace, Los Angeles, CA
- 2011 *In-between Air, Land and Sea*, Catalog, CBI Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2008 *Shelter from the Storm*, Catalog, SolwayJones, Los Angeles, CA
- 2006 *Star Spangled Banner*, Flood Gallery, Asheville, NC
- 2004 *The Ride*, Linc, San Francisco, CA
- 2003 *Edifice/Oedipus*, London Street Projects, Los Angeles, CA
Fabric & Armature Paintings, Miller/Durazo, Los Angeles, CA
- 2000 *LA Art Court*, Pierogi 2000, Brooklyn, NY
New Work, Linc, San Francisco, CA
- 1998 *Red*, Patricia Sweetow Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 1997 *Stretch*, Miller Fine Art, Los Angeles
DNA Windows, DNA Gallery, Provincetown, MA
- 1996 *Dot to Dot*, Room, Catalog, New York, NY
More Dots, Gallery LASCA, Los Angeles
- 1994 *Ocular Playground*, Food House, Santa Monica, CA
- 1991 *Burning for the Living*, Mendenhall Gallery, Whittier College, Whittier, CA
- 1990 *New Works*, Karl Bornstein Gallery, Catalog, Santa Monica, CA

SELECTED PERFORMANCES

- 2022 *Blind Owl*, a part of "Adornment Artifact" curated by Dr. jill moniz, Band of Vices, Los Angeles, CA
- 2021 *Protagonists and Erasures*, collaboration with Emma Jürgensen, PRJCTLA, CA
Reveal, a part of "Urban Paradise," curated by David Eddington, Shatto Gallery, LA, CA
- 2019 *Harmony and Dissonance*, curated by Samuel White for ICALE 1717, Bendix Building, Los Angeles, CA
- 2013 *Invisible in Visible*, Groundspace (collaboration with Tomas Ruller), performances with simulcast, LA/Czech Republic
- 2010 *The Meridian*, a part of exhibit "Psychic Outlaws," curated by John Souza & Annie Buckley, Luckman Arts Center, LA, CA
- 2009 *Independence In Dependence* (collaboration with Tomas Ruller), performances with simulcast, LA/Czech Republic
Fashion of the Veil, curated by Deborah Oliver as a part of "Irrational exhibits 7," Track 16, Santa Monica, CA
- 2007 *Open Situation*, Prague Quadrennial, Wenceslas Square, Prague, The Czech Republic
Scheherazade I and II, BWA Gallery, Bidgoszcz, Poland
- 2006 *Southern Veil*, Flood Gallery, Asheville, NC
- 2004 *Edifice/Oedipus IV*, Kampa Museum, Prague, The Czech Republic
Face to Face, (collaboration with Tomas Ruller), Municipal Art Gallery at Barnsdall, Los Angeles, CA
- 2003 *White on White*, Even, Ise Cultural Foundation, New York, NY
Edifice/Oedipus, London Street Projects, Los Angeles, CA
- 2002 *Impasse/In the Veil*, Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, CA
- 1999 *In the Blue*, Arizona State University Art Museum, Online Catalog, Tempe, Arizona
- 1997 *Dotman*, Kulturzentrum bei den Minoriten, Graz, Austria

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 *Adornment–Artifact*, curated by Dr. Jill Moniz, Band of Vices, Los Angeles, CA
2016 *Come In*, curated by Danielle Rago, A+D Museum, Los Angeles, CA
2014 *Pierogi XX*, curated by Joe Amrhein, Pierogi, Brooklyn, NY
2013 *Paradox Maintenance Technicians*, curated by Max Presneill, Torrance Art Museum, CA
2004 *COLA Exhibit*, Municipal Art Gallery, Barnsdall Park, Los Angeles, CA
Irrational Exhibits, curated by Lida Abdul & Deborah Oliver, Track16 Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
Dialogue Prague/LA, curated by Barbara Benish, Kampa Museum, Prague, The Czech Republic
2003 *-[not (painting)]*, curated by Koan Jeff Baysa, ISE Cultural Foundation, New York, NY
Specificity, curated by Odili Donald Odita, Riva Gallery, New York, NY
2002 *Painting's Edge*, curated by Roland Reiss, Idyllwild Art Foundation, CA
1999 *Sig-Alert*, curated by John Spiak, Arizona State University Art Gallery, Online Catalog, Tempe, AZ
Ulema, Karamustafa, Neshat, Zamani," Hohenthal und Bergen, Berlin, Germany
1998 *Painting Language*, curated by Kimberly Davis, LA Louver Gallery, curated by Kimberly Davis, Venice, CA
1997 *New Acquisitions*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Founder/Director, PØST, Los Angeles, CA
Visiting Faculty, "Senior Studio," University of California, Los Angeles, CA
Adjunct Faculty, California State University, Long Beach, CA
Visiting Faculty, "Graduate Seminar," University of California, Santa Barbara, CA
Adjunct Faculty, Woodbury University, Burbank, CA
Adjunct Faculty, CSU Dominguez Hills, Carson, CA

SELECTED AWARDS

California Community Foundation Grant, Los Angeles, CA
COLA Grant, City of Los Angeles, CA

SELECTED LECTURES

- 2017 *Visiting Artist*, California State University, Santa Barbara, CA
2015 *Juror*, California Community Foundation Grant, Los Angeles, CA
2009 *Visiting Artist*, Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, PA
2005 *Juror*, Noel Fellowship, Milwaukee, WI
2003 *Visiting Artist*, San Francisco Art Institute, CA
2002 *Visiting Artist*, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, WI
Visiting Artist, University of Madison, WI
2002 *Visiting Artist*, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA
2000 *Visiting Artist*, Claremont University, Claremont, CA
Visiting Artist, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA
1999 *Visiting Artist*, UVIC, Victoria, Canada
1997 *Visiting Artist*, Sandberg Art Institute, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Berkeley Art Museum at UC Berkeley
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Lancaster Museum of Art and History

EDUCATION

MFA in Painting, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA
BA in Studio Arts, California State University, Dominguez Hills

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, STANISLAUS

Dr. Ellen Junn, President

Dr. Kimberly Greer, Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs

Dr. James A. Tuedio, Dean, College of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

DEPARTMENT OF ART

Martin Azevedo, Associate Professor, Chair

Tricia Cooper, Lecturer

Dean De Cocker, Professor

James Deitz, Lecturer

Daniel Edwards, Associate Professor

Jessica Gomula-Kruzic, Professor

Dr. Alice Heeren, Assistant Professor

Daniel Heskamp, Lecturer

Chad Hunter, Lecturer

Dr. Carmen Robbin, Professor

Ellen Roehne, Lecturer

Dr. Staci Scheiwiller, Associate Professor

Susan Stephenson, Associate Professor

Jake Weigel, Associate Professor

Mirabel Wigon, Assistant Professor

Alex Quinones Instructional Tech II

Kyle Rambatt, Equipment Technician II

UNIVERSITY ART GALLERIES

Dean De Cocker, Director

Kory Twaddle, Gallery Assistant

SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

Brad Peatross, Graphic Specialist II

HK Zamani - *Edifice/Oedipus*

March 8–May 3, 2023 | Stan State Art Space, California State University, Stanislaus | 226 N. First St., Turlock, CA 95380

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This exhibition and catalog have been funded by Associated Students Instructionally Related Activities, California State University, Stanislaus.

