

TOBIAS RICHARDSON

Circumambulation

6 February - 7 March 2009

The Kabah is a shrine in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It is a cube shaped granite structure that is very ancient. The Kabah is commonly shown in pictures shrouded by black cloth. The Kabah is an important spiritual site for many peoples.

I first became inspired by the Kabah whilst travelling in Burma where I saw hi-tech images of the Kabah in posters being sold on the streets of Yangon. The more I researched the Kabah the more I uncovered a rich symbolism resulting from layer upon layer of history. I was drawn to the simplicity of the Kabah's shape and saw a structure of great allegorical power.

The Kabah represents the oneness of mankind. A pilgrimage to circle the Kabah is a confirmation of ones' faith that God will guide. It is from this ritual that I arrived at the exhibition's title - *Circumambulation*.

Religion, like science, is not necessarily physical truth, but rather a system for organising and defining the laws of the universe, both physically and morally. Both can shock and inspire in the process. For me though religious aesthetics override my experiences in places of worship, so it is through art that I must experience religion. "In our world, it is the artist who creates our meaningful symbols for us, to help us to discover another dimension to life" (Armstrong, K. *Muhammad – A Biography of a Prophet*, Phoenix Press, London 2001)

I have chosen to represent the Kabah in paint. As an artist I have not aimed to create a true impression of the Kabah but instead I have presented an expressive and open narrative. The simplicity of the form is very potent subject matter for me. The Kabah is a forbidden place for me to visit and thus it is magical. It is a physically void space yet psychologically rich. I have removed the Kabah from Mecca and have placed it as an iconic image, as the centre of the earth, governed by astronomy and inspired by humanity.

I have created an installation where the viewer is surrounded by multiples of the Kabah image. The white walls emphasised by the cube shape of the gallery, is representative of the white underside of the black cloth that shrouds the granite structure. The gallery ultimately becomes the psychological and physical space of the Kabah. The multiples represent infinity and enable many interpretations. As an artist the gallery space, like the Kabah, has special significance to me as a place of expression and faith.

Formally the work is abstracted, minimal and refined. Infinity is a major concern for *Circumambulation*, variations of the image are not finite. The lines expose the internal workings, structures and dimensions of buildings and homes that we do not physically experience. The paint drips are expressive acts of creating governed by the laws of physics.

In these works colour is crucial; it is refined and symbolically loaded. Black is both finite and infinite. Here the 'tunnel of light' is completely swallowed by a black hole.

In these paintings a red strip replaces the golden script that usually circles the Kabah. Symbolically red is life and death whilst practically it is a formal consideration. The dripping red suggests a narrative, perhaps a stigmata physically empathising with the persecuted or perhaps a blood transfusion. It is symbolically strong.

White is the gallery space itself. It also represents the shedding of all material to a basic common, neutral element.

I have used the image of the Kabah as a symbol of universality and present it with genuine respect.

Tobias Richardson February 2009

30 x 30cm	\$350	80 x 80cm	\$1,100
40 x 40cm	\$450	100 x 100cm	\$1,400
50 x 50cm	\$600	120 x 120cm	\$1,800
60 x 60cm	\$800	sizes approximate, acrylic, enamel, & collage on board, 2005 - 07	

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Sequential Spatial Experience

6 February - 7 March 2009

Drawing buildings in two-dimensional forms limits the amount of experience and information that can be conveyed. *Sequential Spatial Experience* signifies the notion that architecture is best experienced by moving through it rather than viewing it two-dimensionally. The physical activity of moving one's body through a built environment allows for multiple angles of reference and to also encrypt an emotional experience of the space resulting in a fuller experience. It is the struggle with the limitations of drawing three-dimensional form that is the essence of this body of work. The act of drawing from memory allows for psychological elements to be imbued within the form of the buildings, and these compensate for the lack of physical form by allowing the viewer to perceive ghost like presences. Added to the solving of the drawings is their manifestation through installation where the drawings can be seen as a whole in the three-dimensional space of a gallery.

The 50 odd drawings consist of images of essentially vernacular architecture that I have drawn from memory. The recollection of many of the buildings is incomplete and romanticised. The buildings are remembered as stages for significant events from my schooling, teenage mayhem, first girlfriends, and travels to Asia and Europe etc.

Tobias Richardson
February 2009 (some thoughts on *Sequential Spatial Experience*)

acrylic on paper & collage, 56 x 76cm (approx), 2008 - 09

\$750.00 each

Tobias Richardson's residency is proudly sponsored by Turner Galleries Art Angels and Central Tafe.