

# Made in China

Shai Zurim

Shai Zurim's works lure the viewer with their glistening surfaces. They are aesthetic, funny, and light-hearted, conveying a near post-Pop visibility. A closer look, however, exposes elements, which generate an intricate socio-political stand stemming from their being devoid of violence and free of arrogance, qualities often typical of critical ideologies. The other can thus share in the experience of a richer reality. Issues pertaining to globalization, power relations, and multi-culturalism are deconstructed, examined, and reconstructed through Zurim's eyes.

The title of the exhibition, "Made in China," marks a complex approach to market relations and the economic and artistic production relationships. On the initial level, it indicates the capitalist economy's exploitation of its sources of production. This is distinctively exemplified through the process by which the stone sculptures are produced. Zurim opts for objects originating in enfeebled, mass-produced oriental symbols which have infiltrated Kitsch culture. Made in China, these objects serve as models for large-scale sculptures. This sculptural act ostensibly represents "high" artistic practice (traditional sculpture in stone and an act of enlargement), yet the sculptural reproduction conceals economic, critical, and ethical questions. The "remote control" production eliminates the artist's "handwriting," as it were. In effect, however, the "manual" act of sculpting is preserved in the Sisyphean handiwork of invisible subcontractors. This mode of object-production reflects the incessant engagement in transitions in Zurim's works: transitions between past and present, East and West, high and low, singular and multiple.

The bulk of Zurim's activity takes place in muted realms of our emotional life, a world where narcissism, boredom, and superficiality struggle over the way in which to empty our lives. Art, for Zurim, is the field in which life may be infused with meaning, passion, a sense of community, and awareness—a disillusioned, yet non-cynical position. This is not a war to be won by means of grand political gestures; all one can do is create "social objects" which will

initiate a different type of social-cultural discourse where voices silenced by strong power mechanisms will be heard. The same commitment prompts Zurim to respond to the nuances of everyday life. He implements this by employing practices of reassembly, and disruption of elements extracted from diverse clichés and cultural traces.

In his works Zurim employs multiple media and techniques (readymade, casting, drawing, collage) stylistically charged and stratified. Hence, his works cannot constitute a homogenous narrative; they can only exist as fragments stitched together to form a sculpture, introducing a different meaning congruent with the narrative-poetical potential embodied in their disharmonious combination.