



L'ALDILÀ E
L'ALDIQUÀ

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Zitanpixel

by **Stephan Hamel**

an exhibition curated by Francesca Alfano Miglietti

November 10th, 2016 – January 9th, 2017

Zitanpixel, the carpet exhibition by **Stephan Hamel** curated by Francesca Alfano Miglietti, was inaugurated on 9 November at NONOSTANTE MARRAS and will remain open to the public until 9 January 2017.

Exhibits include a series of gypsy-style rugs that Hamel has transformed to turn them into unique pieces. "Rugs immediately make us feel at home. My love for floral rugs comes from my Russian-born paternal grandmother, who was a wandering citizen of the world, and from her passion for the thousand-year-old history of these very particular crafted pieces". This is what Stefan Hamel says of how he became passionate about these objects that are trod on by everyone and every day.

The rugs exhibited were handcrafted in sheep's wool between the 1920s and the 1970s according to ancient artisan manufacturing processes. The decorations are mainly geometrical and recall traditional meanings of animistic, shamanic and talismanic origin that differ between clans and between peoples.

The rugs tell the story of nomadic peoples, bearing witness to a long-standing tradition that has been passed down from one generation to the next in the Romani, Sinti, Kale and Romanichal peoples who left India at the turn of the 11th Century and travelled towards the old continent, arriving in Europe in the following centuries. Often surrounded by prejudice and superstition, these people have lived at the edges of their host societies and have been subjected to persecutions and to what can be considered diasporas. Nevertheless their spirit and culture have remained strong and proud, and, as a result, have continued to fascinate even their strongest opponents.

For gypsy people, "home" is wherever one decides to settle down. If a land becomes "hostile", then all one can do is resume one's journey: the rugs are a clear metaphor for this concept, as they can be easily transported and can give a familiar and homely feeling wherever you set foot.

For the artist, the Zitanpixel collection is a means to understand and pay tribute to nomadic people, expressed using an object that is central to their lives. Each rug is unique, as it tells its own story. Each rug is a metaphor for freedom and tradition, while also representing an object that has the power to immediately transmit the warmth and the safety of home.

Stephan Hamel was born in Bangkok in 1962, with an Austrian Diplomat father and a Tuscan mother. He spent his childhood in Thailand where he started to well understand multicultural environments. He is an international design consultant. Hamel was integral to the launch of the Edra brand, taking it from an unheard company to an internationally successful and cult brand. He worked in close contact with Massimo Morozzi and he has over a decade experience with Cerruti Baleri. He was deeply involved in the worldwide development of Lasvit a Czech glass and light company. He introduced Lasvit very important designer as Marteen Baas, Arik Levy, Nendo and Michael Young, He also encouraged the collaboration among the bohemian based company and national but famous abroad designers as Borek Sipek, Jan Plechac, Henry Wielgus, and Lucie Moldova. Working as consultant for Vibram, the world leader in producing rubber soles, he promoted the partnership with Carmina Campus an ethical and ecological project which transformed unused rubber sheets into luxury goods. One of the latest works is Fontana Etruria, a group of three monumental fountains made up of the finest Carrara marble realized with Fernando and Humberto Campana.

November 2016

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General info

Exhibition: Zitanpixel

Opening: from November 10th 2016 to January 9th 2017

Hours: Mon- Sat 10.00 am- 7.00 pm, Sun 12.00 noon – 7.00 pm

Location: Nonostante Marras – via Cola di Rienzo 8, Milan

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TEXT BY FRANCESCA ALFANO MIGLIETTI

" (...) We are in time as if we were standing on a carpet: we look around and we see that up on the edge it is all interwoven with ancient motifs, or we do not see those reasons and it seems to us that the plot covers wholly new and different figures. Both visions are true and it could happen that the really same phenomenon seems as the symbol of the end or of the beginning."

Each rug tells a story, although holy books and literary classics provide us with rather in-depth knowledge of the first artefact woven by humanity. The first knotted rug was apparently woven by a nomadic tribe that had abundant access to the raw materials needed, such as wool and natural colours; it is also known that the needs and living habits of nomadic tribes have remained unchanged. Stephan Hamel investigates novel ideas of sacredness, traditional rites and the 'weave' as triggers to talk of light: in this sense, his research is a blind date with a brave and poetical innovator. This is the starting point for the artist to develop the idea of poetic landscapes that, like poetical threads, break away from the rug as though it were just a point in their journey, during which they encounter passions, needs and desires. Hamel's passions are creating and making poetry; the needs are those that, in his works, anchor creation to an inevitable reflection on places; they are needs that encourage one to interpret space as a meeting point amongst different ways of living, different perceptions associated thereto and the creative act it can generate.

Desires are poetical in nature, leading to understand real, natural and architectural spaces, in addition to mental spaces, as mutual and shareable environments. There is a poetical horizon that reveals itself to women and men who are willing to listen. The passion of this project lies in this horizon that exists in sensorial communication, with the senses and through the senses; in this horizon that unravels in time.

"Rugs immediately make us feel at home. My love for floral rugs comes from my Russian-born paternal grandmother, who was a wandering citizen of the world, and from her passion for the thousand-year-old history of these very particular crafted pieces" declares Stephan Hamel, author of the ZITANPIXEL rug collection that includes unique pieces made between the 1970s and the 1920s in country villages in the easternmost part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Roma, Sinti, Kale and Romanichals are all nomadic tribes that around the 11th Century set off from India, travelling through Asia Minor before reaching and settling throughout Europe in the following centuries. According to Hamel, the ZITANPIXEL collection tells the story of these peoples, each rug telling its own story: it is a metaphor for freedom and tradition. The handcrafted rugs are made in sheep's wool: their fur frame acts as the natural extension of the woollen threads used to weave them but also as a breaking point.

Amongst the weaves of thought and in the space created in and between those weaves, Stephan Hamel moves somewhere between need and desire, space and poetry. One can imagine places that come together as poetic landscapes that in turn can renew the perception of those who stop there or move through them, and suggest other ways of living.

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Living with the poetic souls of nomadic people, because a possible pathway for the contemporary world means to imagine, suggest, create physical as well as poetical itineraries. A new atlas of perception is generated and branches out into a habitat that accepts to rise up and change for poetical reasons.

“The natural effect of transposing floral images to the loom is that to our eyes they look as though they were made of pixels. It is as if these rugs were willingly beckoning to the trend of the moment, the ‘pixelled’ prints that are at the centre of the attention of the world of fashion and design.” Each Zitanpixel is a guide that shows us how to listen, suggesting a topographical revisitation of the heart of a room and of word. The idea is to identify places where they can be interpreted, as though they were an open listening room, a real space that has to be reinterpreted as a polysemantic space where “bewilderment” is the sign of a new place, namely the acoustic and poetic “land of the soul”.

It is like being the direct witness of a gypsy celebration or running into the contractions of Samuel Beckett’s theatre, to obtain an essential understanding of the need to recall the mystical nature of tension. In the Zitanpixel, one proceeds step by step and word by word to an excessive intensity of expression, according to a dizzy logic that gives shape to visions, changing them into suspended images.

It is a hieratic and powerful form of communicating; it is also incisive and woven in the weaves of the promise of a single world of values and visions.

In the end, the theme suggested by Stephan Hamel refers to identity and to people who experience migration in terms of identity, places, races and an endless number of morphological opportunities. A sign that show the distance and the diversity: a change in light, atmosphere and horizon.

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