

Art in America

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KARA
WALKER

SCULPTURE PROJECTS
IN MÜNSTER

ALEX KATZ

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REPORTS FROM
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View of Gilberto Zorio's mixed-medium star installation, 2007; at Oredaria.

ROME

Gilberto Zorio at Oredaria

Gilberto Zorio's installation was conceptually, physically and visually stunning. Working with the five-pointed star, Zorio created an itinerary for the viewer that tracked the star both as a political symbol and as a cosmological/alchemical construct. The gallery space itself contained a series of walls that formed a single star. The image of it filling the gallery and bursting out onto the patio was on the invitation, revealing the artist's intent. Within and behind the walls of this "star chamber," Zorio had hidden away elements that were revealed as the visitor transited through the exhibition. The result was a multifaceted manifestation of light, rudimentary machinery and sound.

At the onset of the series of events that took place in this installation, a large, cantilevered leather star began to "breathe." It was inflated and deflated by a loud machine resembling a vacuum cleaner. When this "breathing" reached a crescendo, the lights in the gallery dimmed and from behind one of the walls a strong white light emanated. Visible through a small aperture was a steel-framed star adorned with bulbs that increased in luminosity. At that juncture, a soundtrack started up, playing the "Internationale"—the transnational socialist anthem for the working masses. It was done as an acidic guitar solo, reminiscent of Jimi Hendrix's famed version of the U.S. national anthem. A strobe light went off in the central star chamber and clots of phosphorescent paint began to emerge from invisibility. An elongated glass

flask, suspended in the center of that chamber, was revealed as the source of the phosphorescence. The trajectory ended at the gallery entrance with a large, clear acrylic star moving along a pole that cantilevered it off the wall. Green images of a musical score and of patches of green coagulate were projected through it. The lights came on again and the cycle recommenced after a short interval.

Aside from the sheer physicality of the experience, Zorio appeared intent on addressing what it means for an artist to use a loaded symbol like the star. The psychedelic rendition of the socialist anthem tweaked the star as a political symbol for revolution. Can the Left still wear a beret with a red star, or has such

gear simply become a fashion statement? Is the cosmology of the star also just part of a collective optical illusion fueled by strobe lights and new age "smoke and mirrors"? While there is measured skepticism at the root of Zorio's installation, the journey through this work restored a viewer's faith in the power of this archetype. Zorio provided proof that it is both an empty vessel and a springboard for the imagination.

—John O'Brien