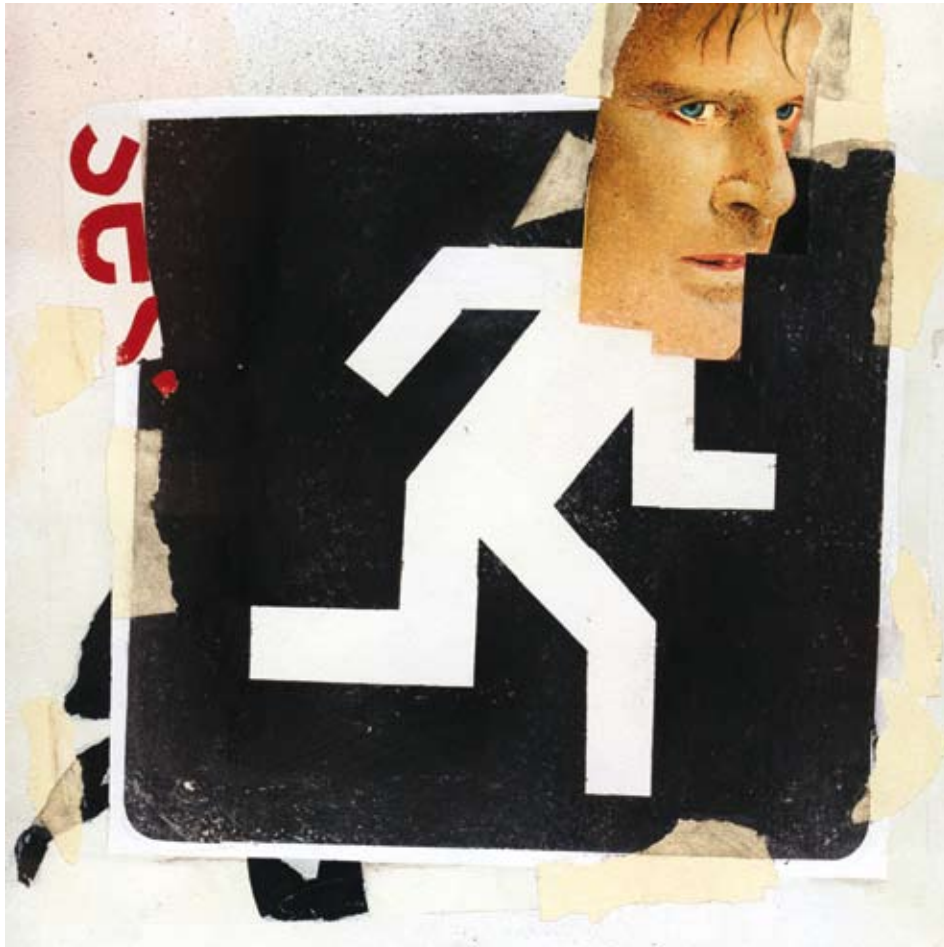




**Asha Zero**



Once famous dead artists by Shane de Lange

We live in a tragicomic space of postmodern sublimity. Everyone in the world is in some way dead due to over-communication that has reduced things into the span of an instant; an implosion into nothingness. In this nihilistic state we wear infamous masks that were crafted by our famous grandfathers and their posthumous brands. As a result of such institutions, things and objects communicate neon billboards of endless "techno-organic" chaos in the hustle and bustle of our "cyber-totalitarian" village, which is an "endlessnessness" that cannot quite be pinpointed. Everything is downloaded and uploaded, dumped and formatted, cut and paste. Everything is understood in terms of rates and bits, gigabytes and gigahertz, tit for tat.

Asha Zero is an artist who has a special understanding of this world; a perspective that he says can be compared to a Duchamp-like hinge idea. But Asha Zero is only one guise amongst many individuality-destroying pseudonyms. The name is not a signifier in a floating world of possible meaning. It is a flickering signal in a virtual domain of electronic meaninglessness. Other aliases include Palinki, Whatsnibble, and Broop Nook, added to which are a pair of bogus corporations: Road-killvisiontoilettries and Mobilediscoetcetera. None of these identities has precedence over the others; they are and are not Asha Zero, they can be used to describe you or me, they indicate and hide the individual and express the anonymous (oneisnotoneandnotoneisone).



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Asha Zero's quirky and witty approach torments traditional notions of identity and makes reference to the various consumer masks we all have to wear, masks that are meant to assert the ego and establish a cohesive identity by solidifying the concepts of the self and individual autonomy. Asha Zero subverts and inverts such ideals by sacrificing his own ego through the mutilation and amputation of his identity which fragments into various constituent and schizophrenic consumable and marketable logos, slogans, characters, and establishments. He uses the various guises in his repertoire to visually articulate and escape the limitations placed on such phrases as "artistic intention" and "art market". Asha Zero, and all the other tokens that accompany this name, is a transpolitical, open-ended standpoint of suspended judgment that creates a lot of room for the interrogation of various projects such as roadkillvi-siontoilettries and mobilediscoetcetera.

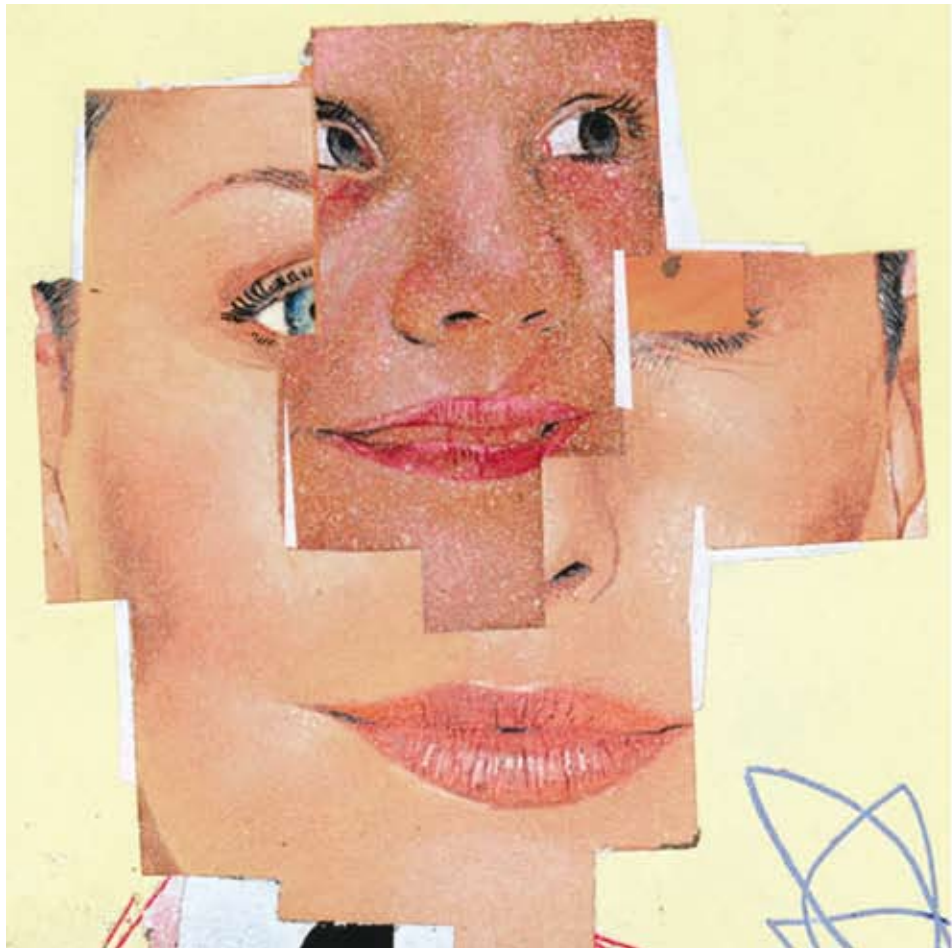
These projects are based on the relationships between the various flattened and pixilated egos, such as Etcetera, Palinki, Whatsnibble, and Broop Nook. Their story is one of history, and the history of the one; a pastiche matrix based on erasure and entropy. Seemingly hinting at the zero that supplements the one, Asha Zero always alludes to the shifts in things, events, actions, and narratives. All these characters are developing identities, affiliations, and operations in their own right, identities that are given expression in various artistic fields and disciplines, such as painting, printmaking, and music.

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Asha Zero's work can be compared to that of many visual artists, such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, and the synthetic Cubists, but most of the influence on him, Asha Zero insists, comes from more superficial sources and have direct bearing on his own artistic sensibility. Music is his muse and the way he looks at his work is a kind of evaluation through musical correspondence. Asha Zero envisages a type of "sound picture": what would a song look like if it were a picture? Undercurrents of the musicians and bands such as Sonic Youth, Beck, Plaid, and Autechre are consistently incorporated into images in a nostalgic grunge/post-rock/electronic hyper-vibe of inscription. This agency is a merger of the abstract poetic sacrament of the now, dedicated, ironically, to the traditions of the past (slow and dated), and the virtual digital drone of the new (instant and accelerated), affiliated with the post-avant-garde and neo-anti-art.

Poster art, specifically Dada designs, automatic writing (automatism), and album-cover design play an important role in this insect-o-matic, MTV screen burn, digital-analogue idiom. This is most evident in Asha Zero's use of the term "imposter" to allocate a label for some characters. The term obviously implies deception and falsity, and it also suggests the archetypal poster boy,





and it also suggests the archetypal poster boy, the face of the corporation and its mediating and advertising machine. This imposter, paradoxically, gives cohesion and authenticity to Asha Zero's practice.

The two "companies" or "collectives" that Asha Zero has established and operates within are called roadkillvision-toiletries and mobile disco etcetera. These ventures give new meaning to the seemingly unrelated terms "entrepreneur" and "schizophrenic". They are platforms for various "artistic practices", which include "traditional" media, in the form of paintings and drawings, and newer agencies such as photocopied booklets and handouts, digital music, and animation. A Potatoes' Secret Wish was the first roadkillvisiontoiletries project under the Asha Zero alias, which featured an exhibition of paintings and a series of handout booklets (A Winner in Hawaii, Zoltron X Strikes, and Bringing Back the High Five in Three Easy Steps). The second project marketed and distributed by roadkillvisiontoiletries was Pet Names in Reverse, which also took on the form of an exhibition of paintings, again accompanied by booklets (The Sound of One Cabbage, Admit it: You Want to be a Little Teapot, Hey! Whatsnibble? The Sunset and Vending Machine, Hold Love Inverted in the Constructed Sky, and The Adventures of Palinki and Broop Nook).

These endeavours can be described as a parody of consumer brands and capitalist politics. The collectives are both the product and the producer. the artworks, such as the

music and posters of Whatsnibble, are consumer goods sold off by Asha Zero. His entire oeuvre is a kind of play on the system using very real products like paintings, T-shirts, and stickers that are sold and can be owned.

The paintings that comprise the exhibition are all hand-crafted and deliberate reproductions of collages by pseudo characters that also really exist: Asha Zero has a legal RSA identity document, listed in the government gazette. Asha Zero plays a game: the "hinge" he exploits is an ambiguous dissection of dualism; real and fake, original and reproduced, specific and unspecific. The collage element of his work and the intuitive poster approach is very Dadaist, merged with the death-drive serial elements of Warhol and other established romantic notions of portraiture. As Asha Zero explains it: "What appears haphazard is worked out and constructed... these (paintings) are 'originals' of the reproductions".

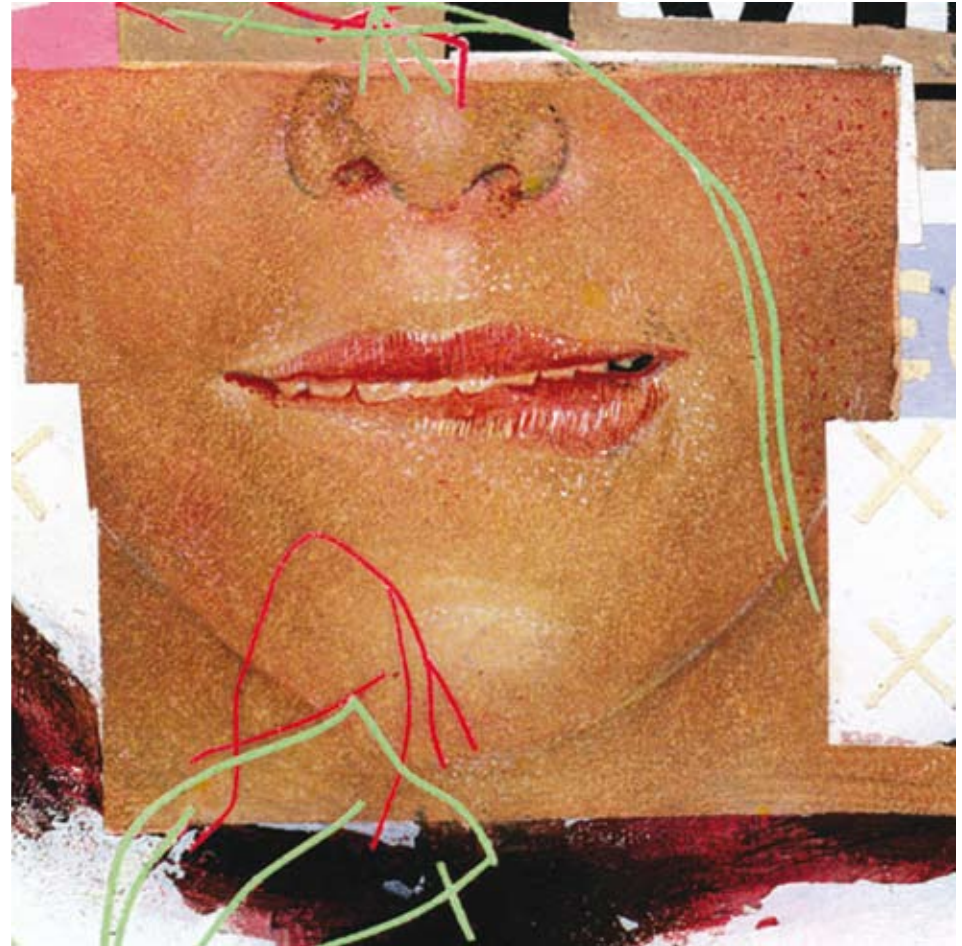
The third project organised by Asha Zero is Venture into the Tinfoil Shadow. Both Venture into the Tinfoil Shadow and Pet Names in Reverse have a tributary animation project titled The Required Uniform Sounds Like a Question. The animation is a visual reference to Asha Zero's musical project/band/group called Tinfoil Shadow that he is launching as part of Mobiclediscoetcetera.

Asha Zero's work is a bricolage of re-presented fragmentation – Xeroxed collages that emphasise issues of naming



and branding, ubiquitously playing with notions of dualism – in which Orwell meets McLuhan in a hyper-reality of terminal identity.

Asha Zero's work communicates the processes that have brought us to where we are today – television dinners, virtual sex, and fake plastic trees. The parents of the nuclear family are lifeless nodes and we are the orphans in the hum of simulacra, derived from the electronic haze of progress, consumption, mechanisation, and homogenisation. We are all counterfeit children, the progeny of utopic entropy and vestigial decay: a sublime collective existing in a binary society of ones and zeros. The zero exists in the absence of the other, the only cipher left for the one to compare itself to. We are mere cellular automata addicted to the accumulation of useless abstract data, playing the game that infests and is infested by the system. Asha Zero depicts the teratoma of postmodern living – the system crash. His works are virtual vending machines derived from an unsystematic, transparent, willy-nilly existence. Asha Zero's art is dense and sophisticated stuff that reflects on the extermination of traditional Western moralism and the influence of electronic disturbances and media orientated irritations. The Occidental value structure has brought about its own extinction through mass consumption and distribution. Asha Zero delivers this message of a mismatched messy age that has somehow become lost in the "post-".







Images:

page 02: erase the heart of the question, 2005,(detail)

page 04: operator in the love heist, 2005,(detail)

page 07: wibble wabble, 2005,(detail)

page 08: noo noo, 2005,(detail)

page 11: monitor hold, 2006,(detail)

page 13: agent for the carrier, 2005,(detail)

page 14: palinki and broop nook, 2005

page 15: etcetera, 2005

page 17: the imposter, 2005

page 18: love bonus, 2006

Medium: Acrylic on board

Dimensions: 35cm x 45cm





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