

## I THE GREEN MARBLE; THE (HI)STORY OF MY WITNESS AND MEMORY 24.01 - 07.03.2020

*You should not allow manufactured images to form your reality.*

A deep Italian voice calmly admonishes us with these words. The voice comes from a weathered face with sad brown eyes. During the course of a lifetime, they have seen too much, but perhaps also too little, for these eyes have been studying the world from the same vantage point for over seventy years. They have watched functionaries, world leaders, and revolutionaries from so close for so long that all faces, or rather backs of (mostly middle-aged, bald men's) heads, have become a blur. From this angle, these visions may look similar, but one thing is clear: they shall not be forgotten.

The voice, the face, and the eyes all belong to a CGI-animated reproduction of the large, green slab of serpentinite, forming the backdrop of the speaker's podium at the United Nations General Assembly Hall in New York\*.

*I, the Green Marble: (Hi)story of My Witness and Memory, 2020*, is the latest addition to a suite of works by **Cihad Caner**, which foregrounds marginalized figures from multilayered and often transnational histories by endowing them with a voice of their own. Caner's whimsical choice of protagonists may immediately signal these narratives as figments of imagination, but the research-heavy nature of his artistic process secures the robustness of his fictions, making sure mainstream paradigms and ossified world-views are in for a good shakedown - that is, if one chooses to take that first leap of faith.

\* Marble-like in appearance, serpentinite is a type of stone that is often used for decorative and architectural purposes.

To this end, the artist's first solo presentation at Joey Ramone Gallery dematerializes and rematerializes this iconic slab in a digital void, where it can float freely and muster subtle movements as part of individual commentaries on various (hi)stories. With an age-appropriate didactic tone, the slab flags the shuffling of roles in a constantly fluctuating world order. The concurrent critique of politicians' perennial hypocrisy is not intended to convince a (likely) already-progressive viewer of the validity of a specific political position; it seeks to externalize, on the other hand, what Frantz Fanon - also referenced in the video - has called a type of *violence rippling under the skin*, specifically of colonized peoples\*\*. This collective yet embodied experience of the *atmospheric* violence described by Fanon is shared today by people vulnerable to all forms of subjugation, and remains most palpable - in the context of Caner's work - on the stone face, when there are no words being spoken. Why would the lips still twitch and move otherwise in these interludes of silence?

In a follow-up mention to his tweet featured in this exhibition, U.S. President Donald Trump indicates his partiality to Carrara marbles. The underlying cause of this mouth's restlessness is certainly not just the fear of being replaced by a block of shiny, white marble, which would, indeed, furnish the General Assembly with the gravitas of an orientalist spa. (The graffitied slogan on a reproduction of the podium in the gallery attests to the fact that it is only a wall with a message after all.) As is apparent from the joyous rendition of Bella Ciao, our serpentinite hero has few qualms about bidding farewells deep down; it is the unabated continuation of forgetting, as well as the perpetuation of tyranny, that is actually heavy on the heart.

Text: Gökcan Demirkazık

\*\* Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 31.

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