

"I.D.": Exhibition

What do you call an artist who specializes in making Identification Cards? Artist as functionary? A very brave person? Or a stupid one? Cos the truth of the situation is that they're the first person you go to when the political situation gets so bad and you need a way out; and the only one you want shot-dead straight after getting your new identity; cos they're the only ones who can positively identify you as a fake!

What do you call an artist who specializes in creating fakes? And what do you call a person who creates a lot of them, and all of them of himself; Schizophrenic? These are some of the questions that draw me to Alamidis's work. It is often said, that an artist only ever creates one canvas in their life time, i.e. that of themselves!, and i think that George has done that! Or at least a fragment of that.

[Amazingly] every picture in the 210 I.d. cards [in this exhibition] is a self-portrait --- the gangster, the priest, the fisherman, the gambler, the old woman, the young girl, the kid, the naive, the ambitious, the bloke with the bald head, the one with a beard, a moustache etc --- all of them pictures of himself -- portraits that he digitally manipulated, soiled, creased, coloured, scribbled on, inked, stamped, handled-roughly, dog-eared, and framed so that they looked like they were products of human beings; to authenticate a rite of passage pass official scrutiny. An official scrutiny that owns and controls the gates of the city, the town, or village. A scrutiny that regulates the flow of human traffic from one point to another and back again.

The point of the game is to isolate and fix the signifiers-to-their-signifiers so that [contrary to a lot of orthodoxy] there is one [and only one] outcome, i.e. A = A[no correspondence will be entered into.]

It is almost unheard of to have so many I.d cards in one place! Not even the authorities would risk so many "unclaimed" [or un-attached] I.d. cards lying around. If you ask someone for their passport or I.d. card, even for a little while, they get nervous. You might implicate them in something.

In this work, the whole horror of Greek authoritarianism and history comes to the fore; crashing down around you like its the end of the world; You see and sense no-one but yourself in those photos, framed as victim or as someone who is Guilty until proven otherwise. And you're guilty, cos you're staring out at the viewer and have a number! --- a suspect!; From which tribe of Greeks did all these I.d cards come from? Or were they from all-around? The whole exhibition [for me] has a sense of genocide about it. Are these faces of the Greeks who died in some Greek prison? Or in some far-flung diaspora? Why do i look so much like them? Could i look like them, if i had to? Each portrait in the show, has its own drama, its own narrative, and collectively they seem to belong to another era when the card was made from gauzes. For a lot of people, the photo in their I.d. card was their first last and only portrait.

George tells us he wants us to handle the material in the exhibition so that we can add our own sweat and smell to them, to help age the material and add authenticity. This mausoleum of the "self belongs in the pantheon of Australian culture — if for no other reason than the dead eyes and dead dreams of 100s or 1,000s of dead people have come to rest in the image of George Alamidis himself