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# Nir Hod's Monumental Snow Globe Sculpture Melds Beauty and Machinery

By Hannah Stamler



<http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/blog/nir-hods-monumental-snow-globe-sculpture-melds-beauty-and-machinery>

*Images courtesy of Nir Hod and **Paul Kasmin Gallery***

According to artist **Nir Hod**, the world is getting too cynical. “A generation ago, there seemed to be more collective romanticism, and I'm nostalgic for that,” he recently told us.

Recapturing a sense of hope about the future is something the Israeli-born artist hopes to achieve with *Once Everything Was Much Better Even The Future* (2013), a large-scale sculpture which restores a sense of beauty and awe to brute machinery. The work is the centerpiece of his solo show at New York’s **Paul Kasmin Gallery**, and is today making its New York debut after being touted as a must-see at last year’s Art Basel Miami Beach.

That the piece was so popular in Miami is unsurprising given its unique form: a 78 1/2-inch snow globe customized entirely by the artist. In place of synthetic snow, it rains down 24-carat gold flakes; at its center stands not a cityscape in miniature, but a robotic pumpjack — a machine used to extract oil from wells — surrounded by rich, amber mineral oil. In designing its look, Hod drew inspiration from jewels, cologne bottles and 18th-century baroque furniture, lending an air of glamor to his snow globe, an item (a tchotchke, even) not usually equated with luxury.

Building the work was an exacting process, as no element was readymade. The shell of the plexiglass globe took over a year to fabricate, and Hod experimented with different materials for the snowflakes, including Swarovski crystals and various kinds of glitter, to find a particle that floated and circulated in the right way. The pumpjack was also tailor made for the piece, and is a working scale replica that moves up and down inside the glass.

The result of Hod’s labors is a unique work which juxtaposes a machine with a sentimental, kitsch object. This unexpected pairing is what lends the piece its core message. “I try often to create a different context for a recognizable object so that the nature of it can then be questioned,” he explained.

Hod chose the pumpjack because it is associated with “greed and environmental destruction,” both of which inform our fears about the future of contemporary society. “We’ve been inundated with cynical predictions about the economy, about climate change, and it's stripped away [our] romantic perspective.”

“The robotic pumpjack drilling for oil obviously played a large role in this shift,” he observed.

By separating the pumpjack from its intended purpose and exploring it for its inherent material and aesthetic properties, Hod’s piece alters viewers’ perspectives on the machine. Instead of vilifying it, many viewers have actually expressed sympathy towards it. “I’ve been told a number

of times that people innately feel bad for the pumpjack because of the feeling of loneliness and despair imbued in it,” Hod noted.

The same languid movements that viewers seem to read as lonely or solemn are also transfixing, and encourage a prolonged gaze at the work. The pumpjack’s swaying evokes a sense of wonderment one might have felt looking at machinery in the 18th and 19th centuries, during the evolution of early industry. This, incidentally, is a history the snow globe is wrapped up in, as the first snow globe model appeared at the 1878 World’s Fair. In 1889, at the Paris World’s Fair, a snow globe showcasing the newly-built Eiffel Tower was made.

And although Hod was unaware of this fact when beginning work on *Once Everything Was Much Better Even The Future*, he acknowledges that it provides an interesting parallel to the piece’s debut at an international art fair.

“It is most imperative that *Once Everything Was Much Better Even The Future* be seen in person to be truly appreciated,” Hod added on the importance of showing it in a fair context.

“[The work’s] contemplative, soothing aura is something that contradicts the mayhem inherent in the Miami Basel context, and that I do like very much.”

Nir Hod's *Once Everything Was Much Better Even The Future* **opens at Paul Kasmin gallery today**. For those unable to make it check out this video of the pumpjack in action.



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