

## jessie rose vala the tortuous veil

Motel is pleased to present the solo exhibition of Jessie Rose Vala, *The Tortuous Veil*. In her third showing with the gallery, Vala transforms the exhibition space into a ghostly cavern. Anchored by 4 large-scale graphite drawings, this mythological narrative negotiates the connections between the psychological subconscious, archaic tropes, and contemporary metaphors. The title of the exhibition refers to Isis' veil, the thin and mutable barrier between the conscious and unconscious worlds. Drawing heavily on ancient myths, Vala explores the fears, powers, violence and destruction associated with four archetypes, the Werewolf, the Zombie, the Shape-Shifter and the Vampire. These conflicts serve as critical allegories for the real-world issues of environmental degradation, over-consumption, mob mentality and political instability.

Vala is fascinated by the menacing and violent side of the human imagination and begs the question, "Why are humans so attracted to brutality and destruction?" In her intricate yet minimal drawings, she depicts female heroines caught deep in their interior landscapes, facing the embodiment of their inner demons. Using the werewolf, Vala eludes to society's relationship with nature, and the fear and elimination of what is seen as uncontrolled and wild; the vampire suggests insatiable consumption and the depletion of natural resources; mindless complacency is embodied by the zombie and the shape-shifter connotes political instability and doublespeak. These shadow creatures undergo a dark transformation, after which a hostile death usually awaits them.

The compositional elements of the drawings reflect Vala's concern with a contemporary revisiting of ancient forms. Just as Isis' veil winds and twists, Vala's compositions trail down the paper, with perspective, scale and shadow losing their logical solidity. With a nod to Chinese scrolls, each piece posits a linear representation of the subject's life path through a successive series of struggles. Vala uses the Tibetan *vajra-rock* islands or cliffs (inverted pyramids upon which wrathful deities rest) as the stage for the girls' confrontations with their demons. Moreover, the intensity and gravity of the narrative are punctuated by the total absence of color throughout the exhibition.

Although the tomes of *The Tortuous Veil* are preoccupied with power, violence and the shadow self, they tempered by the delicacy and sublime beauty of the drawings themselves. Hope and redemption are suggested within the narrative itself and by the graceful and detailed rendering. The exhibition also includes delicate paper sculptures of aspen trees and tombstones, emblems of fragility, impermanence and regeneration. Ultimately, this body of work is a striking neo-mythological exploration, exhibiting both rigorous artistry and allegorical inquiry.

### BIOGRAPHY

Jessie Rose Vala (B. 1977, Madison, Wisconsin) lives and works in Portland, Oregon. Vala is an installation artist, working in drawing, painting, ceramic and paper sculpture, video, and environmental design. In 2006, Jessie exhibited *Lace Overtures*, a small installation featuring an intricate diorama incorporating cut paper sculpture, graphite drawings, lighting treatments and soft sculpture at Aqua Art Miami, (concurrent with Art Basel Miami Beach) to which Adam Weinberg, Director of the Whitney, remarked "C'est parfait!". Vala is a graduate of CCA in San Francisco with a BFA in painting and sculpture (1999). Her work has been shown in Miami, Chicago, Portland, Brooklyn and Oakland, among others.