

# REGEN PROJECTS

Akel, Joseph. "Sue Williams: WTC, WWII, Couch Size." *ArtReview* (April 2014) p. 121 [ill.]

## ArtReview

Sue Williams *WTC, WWII, Couch Size*

303 Gallery, New York 16 January – 22 February

The spectre of terrorism never looked so bright. A cotton-candy-hued meditation upon a war-obsessed, post-9/11 society, Sue Williams's latest exhibition invokes architectural forms that have become symbolic of a zeitgeist characterised by threats of bodily assault and indignity. Deploying a colour palette that could have been borrowed from a pack of SweeTarts, the six large paintings included in the exhibition mordantly sugarcoat an otherwise bitter reality.

If there is a leitmotif to the show, it is an incorporation and iteration of the form of the Twin Towers, which locates in their silhouette a readily accessible cultural archetype of terror and destruction. In *Ministry of Hate* (all works 2013), nebulous clouds in shades of robin's egg blue and sea-foam green are bisected by sinuous lines that render contorted and elongated rectangular forms. Nestled deep amidst the chaotic flurry, in small green text, the words

'ministry of hate' faintly appear. Memory, it would seem for Williams, colours perception, and from out of the hectic frenzy of serpentine lines, distorted architectural forms and flossy bursts of colour, one has the sense that the artist is depicting the synaptic firing of fear itself.

Indeed, the paintings come off as partly abstract, occasionally figurative, 'mind maps'. In some cases, as with *Philip Zelikow, Historian*, one has the sense that Williams depicts the machinations of those individuals directly responsible for shaping the War on Terror. The eponymous Zelikow was, among other things, the Executive Director of the 9/11 Commission, as well as the principal author behind George W. Bush's 2002 national security strategy for preemptive war. Repetitions of twisted rectangular towers emerge from out of dynamic cloudbursts of confectioner's pink and Day-Glo orange, while in the left corner of the canvas, Williams crudely

paints fattened bombs and crude pentagons, the latter silhouette an allusion to another institution targeted on 9/11.

The depiction of amorphous, often gratuitous anatomical forms (puckered sphincters, bulbous mounds), for which Williams has become so well known, are here far less present, though not absent. Amidst the smoking towers and general chaos of *Hill and Dale*, *Black-Ops*, and the gridlike pattern found in *The Serpent*, one can clearly make out the rendering of rounded, gaping orifices and fleshy, wrinkled crevices. If, in her earlier works, Williams evinced certain cultural attitudes towards specific sex organs through their figural manipulation, the scant appearance of them now indicates a further subjugation of the bodily to the ideological. Terror may ultimately manifest itself in very physical forms, but its origins lie within the realms of the psychic. *Joseph Akel*



*The Serpent*, 2013, oil and acrylic on canvas, 137 × 163 cm.  
Courtesy 303 Gallery, New York