

VHILS

HAZE

February 21—July 6, 2020

“*Haze* seeks to address the vagueness and obscurity, the chaos and ill-reflected direction that our interconnected global societies are following based on a model that is fundamentally flawed and mathematically impossible to sustain in the name of short-term material comfort, whose impact and consequences — both to ourselves as a species and to the very planet we call home — we either ignore or refuse to acknowledge.”

Portuguese artist Alexandre Farto (b. 1987) has worked under the name Vhils since his days as a graffiti artist in the early 2000s. Although known for his bas-relief carvings in city walls, Vhils utilizes a variety of media and methods to reflect and inspire contemplation on contemporary culture. He is influenced by the urban landscape — revealing histories of the cities in which he works and their inhabitants across the world. At the same time, he cautions us about the ways our global society increasingly values media saturation, cultural uniformity, over production and consumption.

Vhils' focus on the people of the city — the anonymous resident — forces us to focus on who these values affect. It is us, our children, neighbors, friends — humanity at large. In the fast pace of daily life, we have come to relish any short cut, any material comfort that makes our lives a little simpler. But at what cost? What is the price of us losing the past, using that plastic bag, or buying non-fair-trade clothing? The price, we see in Vhils' work, is a loss of culture and identity. It is dehumanization and economic inequality. It is environmental change and disconnection. *Haze* requires us to slow down and reflect. It asks us to consider the cost of the choices we make each day. In reaction to Vhils' prompting, will we continue to ignore the “impact and consequences” of these choices, or will we begin to acknowledge them?

Born in 1987, Alexander Farto grew up in an industrialized suburb of Lisbon, Portugal. He was influenced by the transformations brought on by urban development the country in the 1980s and 1990s. He took the pseudonym, **Vhils**, after entering the graffiti art scene. This time during his life, Vhils states, was his most formative. He later studied at the Byam Shaw School of Art in London. Since 2005, he has presented work in over 30 countries around the world in solo and group exhibitions, including the EDP Foundation, Lisbon, (2014); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2013); CAFA Art Museum, Beijing (2017); and the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, San Diego (2010), among others.

Ask Yourself

- 1 Vhils calls his process “creative destruction.” What is the difference between the two? How are they related?

- 2 Often called an urban archaeologist, Vhils draws attention to the city by carving into building walls and exposing their history. How do the buildings and material we are surrounded by reflect our actions, memories, and values?

- 3 Vhils sees the relationship between the city and its inhabitants as an example of reciprocal shaping. The city grows, changes and responds to the actions of those who live in it. At the same time, inhabitants of the city are impacted by the space around them. How are you impacted by the city? How have you impacted it?

