



David Keating - *habitual despair*

18 March - 17 April

*Conners Conners*

David Keating's works are a personal quest into the possibilities of image making. For *habitual despair* at *Conners Conners*, Keating is presenting a significant new video work and a series of drawings. Both playfully mix personal iconography and art historical references, following paths of logic that question habitual ways of thinking and seeing. The works capitalize on the innate ambiguity of the line, blending the bodily with the architectural and finding humour and nuance in the uncertainty of images, objects and their perception.

The exhibition *habitual despair*, hints at the nature of Keating's broader project; an engagement with the constructed nature of language itself. If emotion becomes habitualized then aren't feelings constructed in the same way, by rules like a language? If so, shouldn't we ask is there anything that remains unique? Is there anything that can be said to be true?

The series of six line drawings are experimental architectural propositions, imbued within a spectral pink atmosphere. In odd juxtapositions between hard and soft forms, geometric and curvilinear line; limbs, forms and objects casually merge; a coffee table is suspended on arms, a room has eyes in the walls, a humongous hairy leg lies prone in a isometric depiction of an apartment and breasts bulge from what would usually be a flat floor.

On the one hand the works are intimate, funny and personal confessions, dealing with masculinity, desire and the inability of representation to fulfil expectations towards mimesis. But on the other hand they point to a more profound disillusion with the inadequacy of artistic language and a search for a hybrid, which might make more sense than the original.

The artist has said; "for me, in the space of drawing, marking, seeing and being happen simultaneously." With this Keating seems to be extending the tradition that focuses on drawing as a process of thinking, which involves simultaneous naïve belief and scepticism in the limits of drawing as a practice.

For the first time, he is presenting a video work, (*the containers*, 2021) in which the drawing process has been digitally recorded and used as the basis for an absurd narrative. The work refers to a practice called speed painting, popular among amateur digital artists, who share and critique each others videos in online communities. Keating juxtaposes this emerging tradition with a scientific instructional format. This involves a scripted digitally produced voice accompanying the unfolding drawings on screen.

Rather than the usual utilitarian graphics imbued with the authority that we would expect from an informative video, *the containers* exposes the frailty of decision making within drawing. Mistakes and approximations become a part of the process, which reveals a personal struggle with the meaning and agency of drawing, whose flaws are integral to its validity.

Focusing on the theme of containers, of which a house, paintings, a museum, and a television are used as examples, Keating's video muses on the inescapability of the formal, physical and conceptual boundaries that govern expression. Citing Romanian playwright, Eugène Ionesco's imagery and use of gradually devolving aimless speech in works such as *Amédée, or How to Get Rid of It, 1954* and Guy de Cointet's theatrical pieces as prime influences, in *the containers*, the artist explores the resonance between the simultaneous unfolding of drawing and speech. Riddled with non-sequiturs, the reductive speech of the narrator both over-forcefully describes the obvious and renders the interpretation of the scenarios presented tantalisingly plausible but ultimately absurd.

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David Keating is an Australian contemporary artist, born in Melbourne in 1977. He studied at the Victorian College of the Arts and has exhibited widely internationally. His solo exhibitions include Kunsthau Baselland, Basel, Raebervon Stenglin, Zurich and COMA/Chauffeur, Sydney. He has participated in group exhibitions such as *The Brussels Biennial 1*, Belgium and at the Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania, Bass Museum of Art in Miami, Supportico Lopez, Berlin, 1857, in Oslo, Norway and Sandy Brown, Berlin.

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