

David Noonan  
*Mnemosyne*

1 March – 2 April 2022  
Bury Street SW1

Modern Art is pleased to announce a solo exhibition by David Noonan that consists of a new 16mm film work entitled *Mnemosyne*. This is Noonan's third solo show with Modern Art.

Across the span of his oeuvre, David Noonan's work has remained persistently focussed on the interplay between the photographic image and its materiality, on the tension between the illusory quality of a picture, and its physical presence in the world. For over two decades Noonan has collected found historical imagery lifted from books, magazines, and other printed matter, with which he makes collages that take the form of painting, film, sculptural objects, installations, and tapestries. His archive compiles an extensive range of images that are connected through a distilled aesthetic, typically in monotone or duotone, referencing textiles, abstract art and design from different periods in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In Noonan's collages figurative images – the subject often in the midst of gesture or action – are placed in dialogue with abstract surfaces, textures and forms. Using techniques such as silkscreen printing on linen, in many cases the images bleed across several pieces of fabric that are joined together; their seams and edges exposed in a method reminiscent of Japanese Boro textiles.

Noonan's sculptural works also overlay figuration and abstraction; frequently sculptural forms are employed to function somewhere between theatrical props and support structures for images, suggestive of Minimalist sculpture. Across all of Noonan's work there is a constant draw towards liminal spaces, to a de-linear sense of time, and to characters and motifs from times past. And though there is an intuition that these figures connected, it is never clear how or why; their link arises only – as far as we know – through the layered and often unconscious processing of Noonan's eye.

Noonan's new film work, *Mnemosyne*, shown at Modern Art's Bury Street gallery, is his first use of 16mm film since the mid-2000s. 'Mnemosyne', the film's title, is the name of the Greek goddess of memory and mother of the nine Muses by Zeus. With her divine power of Mnemokinesis – absolute control over memories – Mnemosyne was able to grant the dead access to recollections of their past lives. Noonan's film, in which the camera pans slowly across a series monochromatic images, offers glimpses into bygone eras that are never exactly locatable, nor obviously connected through narrative. Noonan's camera, much like his eye that adeptly selects and sorts one image from another, hones in on the details of a face, of the surface of a painting, or the costumes of figures performing. One image seems to activate the next. Who are these characters and why are they there? As the camera moves across these still photographs, plumes of yellow or black dye permeate across a layer of water in between camera and image, as though conveying a wish to animate the anonymous memories held within these pictures. Painting has always been a reference point in Noonan's work both in its source material and in its aesthetic quality, and, *Mnemosyne* marks a new iteration of his exploration of the medium. And while there is an other-worldliness to the film, it is made entirely through analogue means, with a water tank, ink, and a hand-wound Bolex camera. As such, it is formed out of the constraints of the material and techniques at hand. Scored by musician Warren Ellis, a friend of Noonan's since childhood, its 20-minute duration plays on loop across two large monitors combined to make one screen in the otherwise well-lit gallery space that highlights the physicality of the film's presentation, giving the monitors' solid steel support structures and matching bench their own sculptural prominence in the room.

David Noonan was born in Ballarat, Victoria, Australia, in 1969. He lives and works in London. David Noonan's work has recently been the subject of solo exhibitions at such institutions as Art Gallery of Ballarat, VIC, Australia (2020); Fremantle Arts Centre, Fremantle, WA, Australia (2019); Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne, VIC, Australia (2018); the University of the Arts, Philadelphia, USA (2015); Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis, MO, USA (2011); Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia (2009); Chisenhale Gallery, London (2008); and Palais De Tokyo, Paris, France (2007). Noonan's work has been included in the recent group exhibitions including *Monster Theatres: 2020 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia (2020); *Simon Denny: Mine*, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Australia, (2019); *Drawing Biennial 2019*, Drawing Room, London (2019); *Images en lutte. La culture visuelle de l'extreme gauche en France (1968-1974)*, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France (2018); *The Trick Brain*, curated by Massimiliano Gioni, Aïshti Foundation, Antelias, Lebanon (2017); *Call of the Avant-Garde: Constructivism and Australian Art*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, VIC, Australia (2017); *Return to Mulholland Drive*, curated by Nicolas Bourriaud, La Panacée, Centre for Contemporary Culture, Montpellier, France (2017). Noonan will be opening a major new exhibition of work at the TarraWarra Museum of Art, Victoria, Australia at the end of March 2022.

Noonan's work is held in public and private collections including Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Whitney Museum, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Mamco-Modern and Contemporary Art Museum, Geneva; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; and Art Gallery of Ballarat.

For more information please contact Alex Glover (alexander@modernart.net)

Ground Floor



*Mnemosyne*, 2022  
16mm film  
20:35  
(MA-NOOND-00782)