

Michael O'Mahony
Happiness Over Time
St. Hippolyt
April/May 2018

Happiness Over Time is a collection of images that are a recent snapshot of Michael O'Mahony's ongoing process of self-analysis. His work has psychoanalysis at its core, and his intensive and idiosyncratic approach involves various strategies of recording his psychic life. O'Mahony's work stems from a fundamental commitment to Freud's golden rule: to free-associate without inhibition. This deeply introspective starting point shows his internal world to be populated by a heterogeneous host of figures from the outside: computer games, films, myth, products, fashion and advertising. These shallow symbols of our contemporary world are given psychic density and strange new meanings by O'Mahony's dream-like recombinations.

At the core of this grouping of works is a series of graphs that map O'Mahony's fluctuations in mood over the period of a week. With a simple two-axis graph of happiness and time, the artist has attempted to quantify the effects on his well-being of films, beer, sleep, walks, food and family interaction over the christmas period of 2017/18. In doing so, O'Mahony tenderly expresses the desire to know oneself whilst acknowledging the deep alienation and inhumanity of a world of biometrics and big data. These works show the impossibility of applying such limited metrics to the complexity of human subjectivity.

Alongside these graphs are works that display other attempts at self-knowledge, but that also comprise various techniques of image-making. O'Mahony employs various traditional media including drawing, etching and painting, but mediates these through contemporary technologies such as digital manipulation, scanning and printing, complicating any straightforward reading of these dream-like images. In distancing himself from the original act of recording, O'Mahony throws into question the direct translation of unconscious forces into images. Instead, these works are an offering to the viewer to stimulate their own free associations.