

Adam McEwen

Punctures

The Modern Institute, Osborne Street

27th January – 9th March 2024

Preview: Friday 26th January 2024, 6 – 8pm

Adam McEwen's paintings in *Punctures* depict well-known items (swords, pens, straws, springs) and elaborate on the diagrammatic style which has defined his practice over the last two years. In the works, objects are condensed down to their essential features to produce highly legible, deadpan images. The spartan compositions and floating articles lend themselves to metaphorical interpretation, and by homing in on certain mundane aesthetic qualities McEwen solicits a reconsideration of our material involvements.

It is through coincidences of biography that these symbolic objects first emerge for McEwen – allowing the artist to see and employ them with a renewed potency. The military sword depicted in certain works has a personal resonance as well as a symbolic one – discovered during a renovation of his apartment it communicates on multiple levels as a potent symbol of violence but also of novelistic romance. Juxtaposing the sword with Bic Cristal pens in *Red Decisions* (2024) and *Blue Decisions* (2024) brings to mind the expression 'the pen is mightier than the sword', speaking to the power of argument rather than force as a means of socio-political change. The phrase has most often described the power of the press and here references McEwen's interest in forms of newspaper reportage (in particular, obituaries), stemming from his time working as a journalist in the 1990s.

Themes of transience and change are threaded through the exhibition more generally. The liquid in a series of paintings of disposable milkshake cups is all but gone. These containers are set against the kind of abstract, gestural painting associated with 1950's New York and the stylistic contrast with the sharp line of the cups speaks to the commercialisation of the city's more radical histories. McEwen's springs, which he has previously depicted compressed, now embody a coil of energy – within which, for example, a straw might float.

While the works are highly particular the openness of the symbols gives them a universal quality. McEwen's manner of depiction is knowingly shot through with art historical references to both Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein who similarly focussed lovingly on ubiquitous objects. This approach defines the show's oscillation between jubilation to sorrow, as surmised by its title. A moment of collapse.

Adam McEwen (b. 1965, London, UK) lives and works in New York. Selected solo exhibitions include: 'XXIII', Gagosian Gallery, Rome (2023); 'Meddle', The Modern Institute, 3 Aird's Lane, Glasgow (2019); '10, FEELS LIKE 2', Lever House Art Collection, New York (2019); 'I Think I'm In Love', Aspen Art Museum, Aspen (2017); 'Tinnitus', The Modern Institute, Glasgow (2016); 'Harvest', Petzel Gallery, New York (2016); Museo Civico Diocesano di Santa Maria dei Servi, Città della Pieve (2015); 'Non-Alignment Pact', Galerie Art: Concept, Paris (2014); 'Factory Tint', Capitain Petzel, Berlin (2014); 'Sawney Bean', The Modern Institute, Glasgow (2013); 'Atomkraft Paintings', National Exemplar, New York (2013); The Goss-Michael Foundation, Dallas (2012); '11.11.11', Gagosian Gallery, Beverly Hills (2011); 'A Real Slow Drag', Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York (2011). Selected group exhibitions include: 'I Know Where I'm Going - Who Can I Be Now', The Modern Institute, Glasgow (2021); 'Accrochage 3: Pop & Musique/Son', Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2015); 'America is Hard to See', Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2015); 'Reliable Tension', 32 Edgewood Gallery, Yale University of Art, New Haven (2014); 'Graphite', Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis (2012); 'Ghosts Before Breakfast', White Flag Projects, Saint Louis (2012); 'Haunted: Contemporary Photography/Video/Performance', Guggenheim, New York (2010); 'The Reach of Realism', Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami (2009); 'Laughing in a Foreign Language', Hayward Gallery, London (2008); 'Into Me/Out of Me', P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, New York (2006); 'Trade', White Columns, New York (2005); and 'General Ideas; Rethinking Conceptual Art 1987-2005', CCA Wattis Institute, San Francisco (2005).

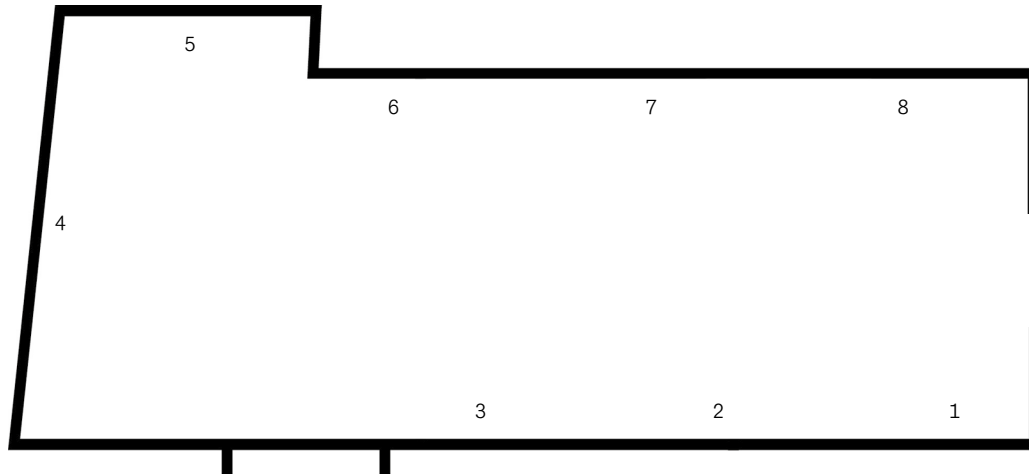
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1 *Blue Decisions*, 2024
Acrylic on canvas
152.5 x 119.5 x 4 cm
60 x 47 x 1 5/8 in

2 *Agent Orange*, 2023
Acrylic on canvas
203.2 x 157.5 x 3.8 cm
80 x 62 x 1 1/2 in

3 *Dregs #4*, 2024
Acrylic on canvas
150 x 99.2 x 4 cm
59 x 39 x 1 5/8 in

4 *Shoulder Pads*, 2022
Acrylic on canvas
203.2 x 149.9 cm
80 x 59 in

5 *Red Decisions*, 2024
Acrylic on canvas
152.5 x 119.5 x 4 cm
60 x 47 x 1 5/8 in

6 *Dregs #3*, 2024
Acrylic on canvas
86.6 x 57.2 x 4 cm
34 1/8 x 22 1/2 x 1 5/8 in

7 *Rusty Pipes*, 2024
Acrylic on canvas
152.7 x 109.5 x 4 cm
60 1/8 x 43 1/8 x 1 5/8 in

8 *31 E 66th St*, 2024
Acrylic on canvas
152.5 x 124.5 x 4 cm
60 x 49 x 1 5/8 in