

Pave Me A River

17.5. – 7.6.2015

Daniel Peterson, proposed by Eva Kenny

Daniel Peterson's first solo show, *Pave Me A River*, at Taylor Macklin, consisting of three anthropomorphic sculptures, a series of anti-fatigue mats and two wall images, offers ways of thinking about how the body can be optimized under contemporary working conditions.

The prevailing ideology issues an image of workers who adapt and thrive on the conditions of instability that capitalism imposes. Newer theories of cognitive labour by Franco Berardi et al imagine the "soul at work" and the harnessing of the mind, personality and imagination by capital. Discussions of the body in contemporary art can be easily displaced into a conversation about supposedly immaterial practices, into a social or post-internet body. Peterson's exhibition imagines the physical, embodied working body as it continues to exist, and the devices used to protect and patrol it. Constantly playing catch-up with ideology, the body needs devices, stimulants, yoga, masks, etc., flexing like crazy to be competitive in a post-human but barely post-industrial environment, to alienate us from the temporal and physical delays imposed by our own bodies.

The anti-fatigue mats laid on the floor at Taylor Macklin generate micro-movements that prevent leg and back strain; the soft pliant textured material used in their manufacture produces tiny levels of instability that activate more and smaller muscle groups, as feet adapt to the shifting ground, than does standing on a hard floor. They are designed to offer relief in order to provide more energy for more work: the support they offer is mobile and varying, destabilizing to produce nervous and physical energy and movement.

Infrastructure crumbles only to be reborn as a kitsch and scenic backdrop, buildings that have outlasted their purpose are haunted in a new form and we are faced with the realization that our labour is often not in lockstep with our derelict surroundings, where the huge disparity between the accelerated turnover of capital through purportedly sophisticated networked systems of production, and the temporality of our own circadian rhythms, means that our bodies lag behind. How do Peterson's objects posit us as sci-fi or mechanical to ourselves? This show imagines the collision of super high tech and super low tech; the low tech of the janky armoured body giving the lie to the super high tech of international labour and capital.

The mask sculptures hanging in the spray booth evoke the former inhabitants of Taylor Macklin, a car customization business. *Valium Oracle* suggests the temporality of the show's duration with a battery-operated CPU fan affixed to the sculpture's face. Started on the night of the show opening, it performs the duration of a worker's life span in condensed form. The fan takes the place of the ventilation system for the original workers and weakly stirs the air in front of it, evoking a literally *aspirational* relationship to capital.

In his 1926 poem *Sailing to Byzantium* Yeats wrote, in "Once out of nature I shall never take my bodily form from any natural thing." Peterson's works imply that the body is at its most natural precisely when it is inventing devices for its own survival. The automation they suggest is not inhuman but most human, forcing a delay to shop on amazon, rig, jack or otherwise quick-fix a solution to the temporality and conditions in which the body supposedly can work. Peterson's sculptures show us both as objects and mortal, exposing these to be not mutually exclusive but mutually dependent categories.