

BERNHEIM

MITCHELL ANDERSON

Sonnet

BERNHEIM, London

February 27, 2025 – April 17, 2025

Bernheim is pleased to present *Sonnet*, Mitchell Anderson's second solo exhibition in London. The title suggests poetic constructions and averments reflecting our world. For centuries, sonnets have been associated with desire, initially exploring unrequited love but expanding towards civics, politics and the lived world, with its paradoxical nature and ambiguities - something Anderson has a central interest in.

The structure of a sonnet is a self-imposed artistic restraint, a poem of fourteen lines with set rhyme schemes and syllables. This prescribed restrictive framework parallels Anderson's practice, and his chosen commitment to the existing, appropriated and found. Here, that is displayed by a characteristic wide array of means and media, spanning painting to the readymade, always with a consistent conceptual foundation.

Filling the historic Mayfair building, the artist conceptualised the installation across multiple rooms and floors with ideas and images echoing, rhyming and alliterating against one another. The exhibition articulates itself around 3 main work cycles. The ground floor presents a grouping of readymade sculptures whose display indicates a progression from birth towards death through objects which abstract and embed a brutal absurdity. The deflated sculptures found on other floors participate similarly as mirrors not metaphors, objects whose used up nature conveys waning and the emptied out.

A new series of encaustic paintings graphically depict broken chain-link fencing, ordered grids of wire held together with tension and now weaving into chaos or freedom. Their titling, *Harlequin*, broaches Anderson's intention to place them in conversation with a modernist genealogy beginning with Picasso and running through Johns and Stiegel, even as he splinters that referenced pattern. The paintings bridge figuration and abstraction, legibility and the equivocal, as the depicted lyrical lines feel recognisable yet impose no decided narrative. With their fields of reflective black revealing a depth of action and colour within supposed voids, they are reminiscent of the breadth of mid-century American male abstraction, as Anderson focuses on the power of display, pattern and repetition and its dismantling.

Interest in organising pleasures, like those of the grid, and their concurrent oppressive natures reoccur in new groupings from Anderson's ongoing series where playing cards are used to embed found texts. Here, each of these works ciphers verse by the Romantic poet John Keats. Sonnets to the artistic talent of others (the poets Byron, Chatterton, Spenser) are coded with turn-of-the-century vintage gay porn playing cards, the poems "The Human Seasons" and "A Song About Myself" with playing cards depicting wildfires and found shirtless images of Luigi Mangione.

The poignant temporality and the erotics introduced visually and materially in these works suggest a vision of contemporary culture as dark as it is Romantic and lived. Reaching across time and fields of engagement, Anderson's works can be read as optimistic and aesthetically awestruck, while maintaining an expectation for the repetition and continuation of societal choices. Existing timely and immutably, his formal structuring of his works and this exhibition as a type of poem crafts his poetics and prosaics as inky mirrored reflections.

Mitchell Anderson (b. 1985, Chicago, USA), lives and works in Zürich, Switzerland.

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