

## Press Release

For this year's Düsseldorf Cologne Open Galleries Josey proudly presents a solo exhibition of British artist Terry Atkinson featuring wall-based 'Grease Works' of the early 1990s and a selection from two recent series of drawings: 'American Civil War 2 + Curtis LeMay' (2018–ongoing) and 'Frontispiece' (2025).

Atkinson's 'Grease Works', *Slat-Greaser Trough 3* (1990/2024) and *Wing-Greaser 1* (1990/2025), both fabricated from original designs for this exhibition, engage the formal language of abstract expressionism. Assembled from DIY-store materials, wooden chevroned and trapezoid structures, reminiscent of the canvases of Kenneth Noland and Frank Stella, are offset by horizontal bands of trough-like frames filled with generic petroleum grease. The 'Grease Works' were started at a time when Atkinson began to recognise the extreme self-assured projection of the artistic subject as a "self-confirming centre of truth" as a characteristic of modernism, which, by the early 2000s, he referred to in shorthand as the "AGMOAS": the avant-garde model of the artistic subject. The 'Grease Works' were an attempt to make works that modelled the artistic subject as a critique of the AGMOAS.

Grease is a polyvalent material: many different meanings have stuck to the works since they were first started in 1986. Volatile, daubed like wet paint into fixed compositional elements, grease continues to run during the exhibition, complicating boundaries between artistic media. Belonging to a threshold moment of our burgeoning techno-feudal era, a soft/hard material dyad was, for Atkinson, analogous to the software/hardware distinction in computer science. In the later 'Grease Works' the dissolution of boundaries became a metaphor for shifting global geopolitics.

Atkinson's 'American Civil War 2 + Curtis LeMay' (2018–ongoing) drawings attempt to articulate his own biographical formation and position within the AGMOAS. It was two colossal civil wars, the American Civil War (1861–65) and the Russian Civil War (1918–21), which led to the superpowers that incubated, conducted and maintained the Cold War. The Cold War permeated every aspect of the lives of Atkinson's generation, not least the art world in which his own art practice was imbedded from 1958 onwards.

In 'Frontispiece' earlier works from Atkinson's *oeuvre* rear-up like so many phantoms, ornamented by detail drawings of motifs from abstract expressionist paintings. Stencilled statements on Art & Language conceptualism are accompanied by a rollcall of assumed pseudonyms. At the centre of the lodestar work of 'Frontispiece', *Portal 1*, surrounded by the emblems of "NARCISSISM", "SELF-ABSORPTION", "CONCEIT", is a drawing of a photographic portrait of 24-year-old Atkinson taken while installing as part of the collective Fine/Artz in the showcase of recent British art school graduate work, Young Contemporaries. This portrait was produced by someone else, yet Atkinson claims it as a self-portrait: "a portrait of myself," as he puts it, "not made by myself." Atkinson takes us back to the beginning to retrospectively "make some sense of my practice being ensnared (inevitably it seems noting the date) in modernism".

Tracking with twentieth-century postwar history, the integrity of Atkinson's long practice – first as part of the collectives Fine/Artz and Art & Language, then as an individual – issues from a searching critical inquiry into the conditions of artistic production and subjectivity in the wake of modernism and conceptualism.

Click [here](#) to read a newly-commissioned text on this exhibition by Jonathan P. Watts.

*GREASE AND ITS COHORTS* is a new publication produced by Josey to mark the occasion of this exhibition featuring texts on grease written by Terry Atkinson between 1988 and 2019 alongside 13 reproductions of the original 'Greaser Work' drawings. The publication is available to purchase directly from Josey [here](#) or at Walther König bookstore in Cologne.

To request a preview of available works please click [here](#)

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