

*FIRST CLASS, SECOND THOUGHTS, INTERMINABLE SWELL* is an exhibition of new work by Angie Keefer, an artist admired for her deep discursive engagement in the visual arts. Her work moves between design and publishing, writing, performance, installation, and teaching, and is often unsettled in its reflexive linking of symbolic or material form with the fluctuating activity of financial and knowledge markets.

Three new works are presented as a unified exhibition divided among two distinct spaces, separating the viewer's experiences as witness and performer. *FIRST CLASS, SECOND THOUGHTS, INTERMINABLE SWELL* occupies Plug In ICA's exhibition breezeway on a monitor wall and our street front gallery, which Keefer turns into a production studio and showroom. These complex works capture and project the image of their audience, implicating viewers in a historic trajectory leading towards the contemporary, commercial delineation of first class status.

*FIRST CLASS* is a video centered on the representation and development of the chaise lounge. Using art historical images, from the earliest known depictions of a *kline* appearing on Greek pottery, to post-Enlightenment paintings of reclining women, Keefer constructs a visual history underlying the design and marketing of modern, first class airline seating. While a montage of these images passes through a small but ornate gilded frame on a stark white wall, a voiceover script adapted from a passage in sociologist Luc Boltanski's *On Critique* is read by a female automaton. In this short distillation, Keefer quotes Boltanski's formulation of class structure based on varying agency for rule-making, bending, and breaking.

A neon sculpture, *SECOND THOUGHTS*, intermittently flashes the word 'second', obscuring the word 'thoughts' every second second. As Keefer states, "The metaphorical transference of a numbered sequence to designate rank is misleading in the case of class, where we're talking about one class and 'the other' regardless of which point of view one assumes, unlike a temporal sequence, in which first precedes second." Both 'first' and 'second' artworks in the exhibition reference marketing innovations that apprehend our thoughts. A neon sign, the epitome of bright and flashing 24-hour storefront advertising, is used to redirect our attention to the seller's intentions, while the development of 'first class' as a marketing category bluntly capitalizes on aspirational fantasies of domination.

Though the exhibition's title implies an ordered sequence from first to second to infinity, viewers encounter the exhibition in reverse. *INTERMINABLE SWELL* is presented first in the breezeway, before entering the galleries proper. Over four synced monitors, a video capturing a seamlessly rolling ocean wave created from stock footage appears suspended in the interior exhibition space.

Inside the gallery, is a curved, freestanding sculpture, the chroma-key blue backdrop for the video composite in the breezeway, which is continuously streamed by a live camera feed.

Keefer intentionally reverses language in relation to the viewer's experience, thus destabilizing reference points that might otherwise orient the exhibition as a system of presentation with a conclusive logic. In a previous work, *Fountain* (2013), Keefer linked the variable action of videos of moving water to changes in futures markets for commodities such as wheat, rice, and oil, as well as gold and currency. When stared at for thirty seconds or longer, the waterfall images could induce a physiological aftereffect in viewers, setting the surrounding room in motion. This motion is echoed in the ghostly effect of *INTERMINABLE SWELL*, as it transposes the viewer from one place to another— from apparent fixity to the foreground of an endlessly progressing wave—while restricting the viewer's vantage at any given moment to only one or the other point of view. Meanwhile, socioeconomic markers, from the chaise lounge and art historical references, to neon signage and Boltanski's class analysis, provide a context for dislocating ourselves amidst a systemic jumble in constant flux.

Angie Keefer is an artist, writer, teacher, and publisher, though the distinctions among these categories are much less definitive in Keefer's work than comma-separated terms would indicate. Taking an interest in the incidental aspects of art making and its dissemination—from critical & commercial positioning through language, to surrounding labour, and shifting market forces— Keefer exposes and pushes at the seams of that which holds the enterprise together. She has exhibited extensively in the USA as well as Europe and South America. Recent exhibitions include *Greater New York*, PS1, New York (2015-16); Kunstverein Munich (2015); Whitney Biennial, New York (2014); Objectif Exhibitions, Antwerp (2013-14); and Yale Union, Portland (2013). Keefer has also worked with various organizations to stage performances, talks, seminars, and other series, including Artists Space, New York (2015); Liverpool Biennial (2014); Contemporary Art Centre (CAC), Vilnius (2014, 2011); Mercosul Biennial, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2013); Witte de With, Rotterdam (2013); São Paulo Biennial, Brazil (2012); and The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2012), among others. Her writing has recently appeared in *Mousse*, *Harvard Design Magazine*, and *Bulletins of The Serving Library*.

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