

Katharina Marszewski

All Eyez Inn

Conversation between Katharina Marszewski and Joseph Constable

JC

Tell me about the various phrases that we see throughout the exhibition. There is the title of the show – 'All Eyez Inn' – but also a fictional movie poster denoting a 'visual shelter', whilst the term 'public diamond' is similarly incorporated into another piece. You have previously spoken about these words and sentences as a kind of glue that holds things together, so I am interested in how language functions both within this exhibition and also within your wider practice.

KM

It is about finding a strategy or a method to bring these different fragments together. I like the metaphor of the exhibition as a body in that one tries to see the space from different angles, trying to find a name for it and define it. You cannot say exactly what it is, however, because then it disappears through this naming.

JC

Or these works are defined as a singular form.

KM

Exactly. This is why it is difficult as an artist to find words to define what it is that I am producing. I try to use different languages – linguistic and visual – but I also use techniques within writing, such as repetition in order to place an echo on linguistic expression.

JC

For me the exhibition is presented as a series of structural relations. As you say, there is something very bodily about your approach to space and how you conceive of the gallery as a living, breathing thing – a *gesamkunstwerk*.

KM

Yes – I like to use the exhibition as a stage with actors performing as part of the show.

JC

Like a repertoire?

KM

Yes, like a repertoire. But on the other hand I also like to put one element, such as an image, through a particular process of thinking, producing, thinking again, and overlapping. Without this process they are all just fragments without connection. I think this is something that divides me from other working practices, where artists focus on one work at a time to the point that it is ready to present.

JC

You have also produced a new sculpture for the exhibition, and this work seems to be the one work that could be considered as the most composite and 'finished'. Do you see this as a more self-contained artwork?

KM

I think of it as a kind of motor or a heartbeat through which the rest of the exhibition is related. I like to think of it as an 'essential' communicator.

JC

Yes, and this idea of communication and the heart takes us back to the idea of the body. On one level there is the simple identification of the heart with the sentiment of communication, be it emotional or psychological, but the work also refers to the physical channels within the body and the connection from the inside to the outside.

KM

The telephone wire is another crucial element, as it represents this idea of being in-between two different states. It connects to the term 'visual shelter' or the idea of placing a lens over things.

JC

The work also relates to your approach to working as an artist: a service-based strategy where this communication device becomes part of your own imagined organisation or corporate identity.

KM

I like to relate my position as an artist to that of a businesswoman. Or at least I enjoy fantasising about it. I like to speculate about these 'other logics' that are at work.

JC

Can you tell me about the visual motif that we see in several works throughout the exhibition?

KM

The use of this image in different variations raises a further question of whether every figure I use is intended as a self-portrait; a gesture towards my own artistic process. I found this image in a book of agricultural reports, something that I was reading. It is a documentary photograph of two women working in what seems to be a foreign location. I call them *searchers*; they are searching for something.

JC

Yes and once again we have another conception of the body: the exhibition, the centre of communication, and now also the physical bodies that we see in this repeated image.

Would you say that your work is nostalgic? In previous works you have drawn upon the past through both image and text. Whether these are factual or fictional references, there is often a sense that these images are no longer present – what has been termed a 'correspondence of events-that-never-were'. How do you utilise forms from the past?

KM

I would rather call it a desire for a re-turn. This feeling of longing can eventually become part of my material. Yet it needs to be shaped, like any other material, in order to 'fit' my contemporary approach; I need to see if it can be relevant to *this* times rather than *that* time.

JC

Yes, nostalgia suggests a use of the past in such a way that it stays as a fixed form; it remains unchanged, whereas you re-form it within the present moment. How do you identify with this question of the present moment and how we can define something as 'contemporary'?

KM

As an artist I feel a responsibility to ask myself this question – what is contemporary? Is it just individuals who are producing *now*? For me, it is about strategies; the process within my head

which leads me to stage and direct various forms within the exhibition in order to find a particular 'style'. For me, being contemporary today means being aware of this constant state of 'becoming' and therefore learning the necessary tools to direct my version of the contemporary.

JC

The idea that your installations have a particular 'style' initially seems quite contradictory to the way in which you work. Can you elaborate on what you mean by this term?

KM

For me the meaning of the word 'style' comes rather from rap music. Here you embody a certain 'style' and sample other 'styles' in order to capture a particular atmosphere or tone, but one that is constantly eluding a single definition. I feel comfortable talking about style. It is what you actually see before you receive the rest of the information. It is here that as a viewer you have to be confident and trust your own intuition.