



Jonathan Callan

*Drawings and other objects from the living room table*

Josee Bienvenu is pleased to present Drawings and other objects from the living room table, Jonathan Callan's third exhibition with the gallery. With this show, Callan allows access to an intimate side of his practice. With studio access denied during two separate lockdowns, cut off from usual tools and materials, almost all works in the show were made at home, on the living room table, from scratch on blank paper.

Because of his critical preoccupation with the limitations of language, Callan usually works with text, books mostly, but also maps or photographs - as his main source material. Embedding, dissolving, cutting, folding or punching, he amplifies the physical qualities of the object and generates new meaning with his own system of inquiry. He likes to build images by minutely altering and removing data; appropriating photographs from books to scratch their surface leaving only one or two isolated characters floating on an empty space. Some objects and altered book pages are presented here, but the core of the exhibition is a group of new drawings.

"Obviously everyone's experience of the pandemic is unprecedented. I could hardly help but let some of the more abstracted themes of infection creep into the work. So there are meshes, networks, aggregations, particles and the feeling perhaps of things growing. Ever since I was a small child I've been peculiarly interested in time, what it is, how it might be measured, how it sometimes seems to speed up and slow down. And from a very early age, having an appreciation that at some point, for all of us, we are taken out of the flow forever. So the mark making might be analogous to the cliché of the prisoner marking off the days on the cell walls. Sometimes I simply might want a record of how long the drawing took, expressed through repetition.

A lot of the drawing equipment I used came from my mother who used them as a 'tracer'. She was employed in the days before digitization to make full sized copies of engineers drawings which then would be fed through a dyeline machine to make blueprints. It was very exacting work. So three of the drawings are made with her spring bow compasses, old fashioned things designed to hold ink, in this case thin acrylic paint.

I am fascinated by order and disorder. Artists, Scientists and Architects have long been interested in how structures can have identifiable, perhaps even precise forms and yet within those forms there is the potential for chaos. And of course the reverse is also true. So some of the drawings have a simple focus or shape, or a set of rules that are 'undermined' by more organic and random choices. The dot and mesh drawings were made without any formal plan and are perhaps the most straightforwardly organic. Though they do reference ideas of contagion and spread. The numbered, and most recent drawings, came after I'd decided to make a drawing illustrative of a single sentence- 'An Index on Non Statutory Blobs' I wanted to see if random marks might approach the condition of language. I kept thinking of the Rosetta Stone whilst making it. Then I thought I would do the opposite- regulatory marks that might in themselves express difference. So I decided to make the amount of paint my one brush would hold be the arbiter or rule. I would paint a predetermined number of squares, patterns are introduced due to the number of squares and the thinning paint. Crucially none of the pigments are pure. As the paint sits, both on the paper and in the jar, the pigments tend to separate and fall out of suspension, this introduces an important point of disorder into each piece." (Jonathan Callan, March, 2021)

Born in Manchester, England in 1961, Jonathan Callan lives and works in London. His work has been exhibited extensively in museums and galleries throughout Europe and the United States. Select exhibitions include: Villa Datri Foundation for contemporary sculpture, L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, FR (2020); The British Museum, London, UK (2019); Fundació Vila Casas, Barcelona, (2019); Kunstmuseum Villa Zanders, Bergisch Gladbach, Germany; Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, NH (2017); Islip Art Museum, East Islip, NY (2014); Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT (2014). His work is included in various museum collections including: The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The British Museum, London; The High Museum, Atlanta GA; and Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ.