

Jeremy Millar 2 May – 6 June 2010

HICA, The Highland Institute for Contemporary Art, is to host an exhibition of Jeremy Millar's work, opening on Sunday 2nd May 2010.

Millar is currently AHRC Research Fellow in the Creative and Performing Arts at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, University of Oxford. He has exhibited widely in the UK and abroad including Tramway, Glasgow; CCA, Vilnius; Rooseum, Malmö; Bloomberg Space, London. Recent exhibitions include Vigeland Museum in Oslo; and Tate Modern, London.

This exhibition, including two new works, considers a sense of emergence, or unforeseen development, which is central to the creative process, no matter how pre-planned the work in question. Preparation is in many ways the subject of one new work, an artist's film made with the acclaimed pianist John Tilbury 'preparing' the Steinway at his home, in the manner called for by John Cage for his 'Sonatas and Interludes' (1946–8). In this preparation, metal screws, bolts, washers, pieces of plastic, and even an eraser, are placed between the strings of the piano, thereby altering the sound of the instrument to something often more akin to a Balinese gamelan. What remains extraordinary, however, is that such a transformation is made using the most modest of means — Tilbury's collection of screws and bolts look as if grabbed from any shed worktop — and as such might be considered a succinct analogy for the artistic process more generally.

Neutral (Diluted) (2007), an earlier series of works similarly using simplicity to refer to complexity, is inspired by two important books: François Jullien's *In Praise of Blandness* and Roland Barthes' *The Neutral*. Jullien, a prestigious sinologist, presents the Chinese notion of blandness (*dan*) as markedly different from its perception in the West; whereas we might consider it as a lack of defining qualities, within Chinese aesthetics it is considered the balanced and unnameable union of all possible values; as richness. Roland Barthes' book consists of a series of lectures given at the Collège de France in 1978 in which he considers possible embodiments of the Neutral (such as sleep, or silence) or of the anti-Neutral (such as anger, or arrogance). Of particular inspiration for Barthes, was a bottle of ink he bought from the Sennelier shop, and which he spilled upon his return home; the colour was 'Neutral'. Millar also bought some bottles of this ink from the Sennelier shop, (coincidentally on the same date as Barthes — 9 March) with which he made these works. These drawings attempt to represent such a notion of the Neutral, or of blandness, which in Chinese aesthetics is considered the undifferentiated foundation of reality, 'the point of origin of all things possible'. The dilution of the ink, in turn, might be considered an attempt to limit, albeit partially, the seemingly-endless possibilities such a state might offer, a first point of engagement with such infinitude.

The final work also draws Millar's interest in Chinese aesthetics, and in the occult practice of scrying, by which spiritual visions, of the past, present, or future, are observed in a medium; whether stones such as obsidian, water, or ink, an activity that has been noted in almost all cultures. In this new work, a small Chinese 'Hare's Fur' bowl from the Song dynasty (960–1279) is placed before the large window of the gallery, looking out onto the landscape beyond; into this is placed a freshly ground solution of Chinese ink, thereby creating a black reflective surface such as might be used for observing psychic visions. Here, and elsewhere in the exhibition, Millar's work is a simple invitation for us to consider that which lies beyond the most immediately apparent.

Forthcoming solo exhibitions include CCA, Glasgow (August 2010). Millar has also conceived 'Every Day is a Good Day' for Hayward Touring, the largest exhibition to date of the visual art of John Cage, which will open at Baltic in June 2010. He has published over eighty texts in a number of international publications. His books include *Place* (with Tacita Dean, Thames and Hudson, 2005) and *The Way Things Go* (Afterall Books, 2007). He has contributed to many artists' publications, and to magazines and journals such as *Art Monthly*, *frieze*, *Modern Painters*, *Parkett*. A monograph on Millar's work, *Zugzwang (almost complete)*, was published in 2006.

The exhibition has been supported by the Henry Moore Foundation and the Scottish Arts Council.

It runs from 2 May - 6 June 2010, and is open on Sundays 2 - 5pm, or by appointment.

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