

MASSIMODECARLO

TONY LEWIS

THE DANGERS (AS FAR AS I CAN SEE)

“What is Dangerous here is a turning away from...the turning away from...anything any white American says...but I don’t know, and neither does Martin Luther King- none of us know- how to deal with those other people... who don’t believe anything the white world says, and don’t entirely believe anything I or Martin say.”
- James Baldwin

Massimo De Carlo is pleased to present *The Dangers (As Far As I Can See)* - Tony Lewis’ first exhibition in our gallery in Palazzo Belgioioso in Milan.

Tony Lewis’ practice focuses on the convergence of semiotics, abstraction and drawing: graphite pencil and paper are the mediums the artist uses to trace and create linguistic narratives and reflections on gestural expression.

For this exhibition, the artist is presenting a new body of work that is composed of a series of drawings, seemingly simple abstractions, which conceal intricate narratives, based on a nine-year examination of William F. Buckley Jr.’s argument from his famous 1965 debate with James Baldwin.

The Debate between the author and literary ambassador for American civil rights Baldwin and one of The Godfather’s of modern American conservatism Buckley, which took place at the Cambridge Union, was a crucial contest in the fight over civil rights: the proposition before the house was *“The American Dream at the Expense of the American Negro.”* Enshrined on YouTube and in countless documentaries, the battle remains an uncanny exchange.

The Transcript and video documentation of Buckley’s argument is the source material the artist revisits cyclically. *The Dangers* takes its title directly from Buckley himself:

“...where the negro is concerned, the dangers as far as I can see at this moment, are that they will seek out for some sort of a radical solution on the basis of which the true problem is obscure.”

The large-scale works showcased in *The Dangers* are the trace of the evolution of Tony Lewis’ investigation on abstraction as well as figuration as a means of communication. Prompted by the words of James Baldwin stated above, Lewis performs the notion of “turning away from” by actively challenging his natural impulse, and listening to Buckley’s language, thesis, and rhetorical strategies.

Lastly, The large graphite on paper sculptures the artist refers to as *“floor drawings”* have been activated throughout the exhibition to perform the act of listening to Buckley’s argument, as well as embody the discomfort and inevitable distortion of a physical body after years of listening.

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Tony Lewis was born in 1986 in Chicago, where he lives and works. His solo exhibitions include: *Campo de juego*, Art Projects Ibiza, Ibiza, E (2018); *Plunder*, Rose Art Museum, Waltham, USA (2017); *Alms, Comity and Plunder*, Marino Marini Museum, Florence, I (2016); *Pressure Free Weight Power Nomenclature Movement*, Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland in Cleveland, USA (2015); *Bindery Projects*, Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA (2013). Tony Lewis has taken part in group shows among which: *Speech/Acts*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, USA (2017); *The Revolution Will Not Be Grey*, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, USA (2016); *Imitation of Life: Melodrama and Race in the 21st Century*, Home Museum, Manchester, UK (2016); *Walls and Words*, Elridge Street Synagouge, New York (2014); *LUMP Projects*, organized by John Neff, Raleigh, USA (2013); *News from Chicago and New York City*, Feibach, Minninger, Cologne (2012); *People of Color*, Gene Siskel Film Center, Chicago, USA (2012); Tony Lewis has participated in the Whitney Biennial of 2014 at the Whitney Museum of American Art of New York.

Hard Facts:

Massimo De Carlo, Milan

Piazza Belgioioso, 2 - 20121 Milan, Italy

From January 22 to March 28, 2020

Opening reception on Tuesday January 21, from 19:00 to 21:00

Open Tuesday to Saturday, 11:00 – 19:00

For further information and materials:

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