

KLAUS WEBER

ALL BODIES FALL EQUALLY FAST

21st SEPTEMBER – 28th OCTOBER

MAIN SPACE:

Sandfountain
2012
Prefabricated concrete fountain, sand
250 x 400 x 400 cm / 98.4 x 157.4 x 157.4 in
Ed. 1/3 + 1AP
HS8-KW3615S

GALLERY EXTERIOR / OFFICE:

Untitled Broken Window
2012
Coloured safety glass
Unique
171 x 175 cm / 67.3 x 69.9 in
HS8-KW3627S

SECOND SPACE:

Untitled Vitrine
2012
Plastic anatomical model, silicone mould and plaster cast
of a death mask, grasshopper with
human hair antennae, glass vitrine
92 x 57.5 x 170 cm / 36.2 x 22.6 x 67 in
Ed. 1/3 + 1 AP
HS8-KW3629S

Five minutes into a conversation with Klaus Weber during the installation of ‘all bodies fall equally fast’ at Herald St, I was reminded about a cinema visit the night before and a trailer for the Hollywood film *Looper*. In the picture, a twenty-five year old time-travelling assassin who lives in the year 2042, suddenly faces the dilemma of being hired to kill his fifty-five year old future self. Highly produced circular issues of mortality abound in this concise jolt of science fiction, and however crass it might seem, this short promo distillation connected neatly with the intricate nature of Klaus’ verbal ruminations, as well his sometimes-hallucinogenic work. Reading previous texts serves to reinforce a concern for Klaus’ looping themes by other writers. Alex Farquharson, for example, who wrote for the artist’s 2008 Secession catalogue, titled his essay ‘Collision Time’, and it just so happens that ‘Collision’ is the name of a track by the late 1980s psychedelic drone band Loop, whose singer Robert Hampson repeats and chants the lyrics ‘Collision Time’.

To start with, one can see other threads of circularity not only within each work in this exhibition, but between the three works themselves, from *Sand Fountain* constructed in the main gallery, through *Untitled Broken Window* installed in the building’s front wall, to *Untitled Vitrine* (all works 2012) situated in the back room. *Untitled Vitrine* takes us on a journey through Memento Mori objects placed in a transparent box, similar in scale to Snow White’s coffin. Firstly we are shown an altered, to-scale anatomical model of a human abdomen with strange facial characteristics (‘when I took all the teaching organs out, it seemed a face was staring at me: an anthropomorphic mask, but concave, almost a negative’, says Klaus), followed by a mould for a bust that also flips visually from positive to negative when one moves around it, a cast from the mould itself, and an Egyptian locust with antennae made from human hair. It’s important to note that, from this collection of objects, the facial cast was taken from a psychiatric patient who was killed on a bicycle as he attempted to escape from an asylum approximately fifty years ago (the grandfather of a friend of Klaus cast the dead man’s face because

he found it interesting), while the locust is a tribute to a dead grasshopper Klaus found outside of his studio in Berlin at the end of the summer in 2011. Initial themes of transcendence and finality are eluded to through the 'lifelike' animated visual oscillation of the mask, the patient's desire to escape his incarceration, and the imagined jump of the grasshopper from its sarcophagus. However, freedom's impossibility is real; both patient and grasshopper are lifeless and what's poignant is the seasonal timing of this exhibition. In Aesop's fable 'The Grasshopper and the Ant', the grasshopper is the symbol for summer's demise. The story goes that the grasshopper plays a violin in a field as crops are collected by an ant, only to be without sustenance when autumn comes. When the grasshopper pleads with the ant for food, the ant rebukes him for his idleness and leaves the grasshopper to die. As a symbol for cultural transcendence and a spirit of light, the grasshopper's associated with astral travel, and also with evil spirits. For example, the introduction to *The Exorcist II* pictures the insects descending on a town en masse, while the locust also has links with the desert and is historically famous for destructive plagues on a Biblical scale.

By turn, drought and plague are referred to in *Sand Fountain*. Originally commissioned to demonstrate power over nature and provide a useful public service (one could drink from them), fountains are now more likely to symbolise private property. Operating like a giant slow-moving shove-halfpenny machine, this new work points to the current inexorable move from public to private in our culture and the increasingly schizophrenic politics surrounding public art. Coming after a ten-year series of fountains, which Klaus sees as essentially urban sculptures with a utopian character, *Sand Fountain* will be his last, and it's distinctly dystopian and apocalyptic in nature. As a self-assembly prefabricated model ordered from Italy that circulates sand instead of water in a loop through its system, it couldn't be more simple, compared, for example, with the artist's homeopathic LSD fountain *Public Fountain LSD Hall* (2003) made from Victorian lead crystal from the 1851 great exhibition. In effect, *Sand Fountain* is also a complete reversal of the optimistic *Loma Dr/W 6th St.* (2002), Klaus' first fountain, which took a deliberately wrecked car from the Los Angeles police department's pound and placed it by a gushing fire hydrant. This one-day work used catastrophe as a positive force in an area marked for regeneration; both beautiful and useful, this spectacular water jet situated in the desert city artificially plumbed with water, acted with sunlight to create a rainbow-emitting fountain, while people from the local KFC refilled their cups from the stream of water.

If local urban developers referred to the area of LA where Klaus' initial fountain was installed as a 'transition zone', we can see *Untitled Broken Window* (importantly, glass is a material originally hewn from sand) as a direct rumination on Wilson and Kelling's 1982 'Broken windows theory'. This criminological hypothesis recommends that, once the poor and dispossessed have been removed from an area, broken windows need to be replaced immediately, otherwise the environment will fall back into disrepair at a rate of knots and the population will become disorderly again. As if recognising this fact, Klaus' site-specific broken blue window, installed in Herald St's office wall, contains a circular impact point that is so large it's comical, while beautifully dysfunctional rays emanate from its centre as if from a piece of holy stained glass or an all seeing eye. This correlation between urban theory and the church window is no accident: both start from the point of view that humans are bad and need to be regulated. If we see *Untitled Broken Window* as a permanent catastrophe (the window is laminated on both sides, so it's impossible to fix) the gallery becomes a recalcitrant anti-cathedral provoking a call to arms for destruction and de-regeneration, as well as an example to urban theorists to accept disintegration and entropy as inevitable.

In essence, 'all bodies fall equally fast' is a utopian statement that imagines a position of equality, no matter what one's class or financial status, a situation that happens in reality to a mass in a vacuum. The exhibition simultaneously recognises themes of Memento Mori, which are prevalent through the fall of the grasshopper in Aesop's fables, the fall of sand and water, the fall of the canon ball on a glass window, and the (contested) fall of humanity through 'broken windows theory'. As the writer Clemens Krümmel has previously said of Klaus' meandering narratives, 'Time after time, Weber's works evince forms of circularity, turbulences, [and] obtusely-divine loops.'

Andrew Hunt