

Sing Plunder, Think Gentle Damage, Maintain Tomorrow, Et Al.

Tony Lewis

11.10.2021

17.11.2021

MASSIMODECARLO is pleased to present *Sing Plunder, Think Gentle Damage, Maintain Tomorrow, Et Al.* premiering new artworks by the Chicago-based artist Tony Lewis (Los Angeles, USA, 1986). For this exhibition, the artist is presenting a new body of eight new drawings.

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. Lewis uses a dynamic shorthand gesture to merge selected text fragments and words with drawing that stratifies the page with a mysterious code as a sort of meaningful and textured map. These text drawings are a journey through the basic roots levels of drawing involving shape, line, color, language and getting to a place where all those things can happen at once. The gestural lines appear as abstract mark-making to those unable to read stenographic script. However, each word in this series delineates a message about race, power, and communication, often referencing historical facts or situations. In dismantling language and undermining its authority, Lewis exposes the inequities and inadequacy of existing linguistic and power structures.

These works are made with materials which the artist has mastered with years of experimental and intense use, such as the pencil, graphite, rubber cement, and paper. The series is built over days or weeks, layering stages of creation and intervention.

The drawing "Tomorrow" exemplifies Lewis' creative process. It has explicit and opaque meanings, since the word at once can trigger universal feelings of the perpetual unknown - something always just out of reach, as well as elicit specific feelings of hope or fear in relation to the future.

"Totally" exemplifies the artist's reflection upon the concept of freedom of disjunctive language providing that formal power within a smaller drawing.

The series presents the artist's signature glyph alphabet, influenced by his fascination for stenography. Each drawing starts with a graphite

symbol which is the foundation of his biomorphic compositions.

The exhibition is accompanied by some exclusive content, including a selection of words by the artist, to be found on our Instagram account @massimodecarlogallery

Tony Lewis was born in 1986 in Los Angeles; he lives and works in Chicago. 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 Synagogue, 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.