

TONY LEWIS

## I BELIEVE HISTORY IS A FORCE

Massimo De Carlo Gallery London is proud to present *I Believe History Is a Force*, the first solo show in London by the American artist Tony Lewis.

Lewis's practice articulates itself as a series of drawings that translate and question via graphite on paper the underlying connections between the word and the image, the symbol and the sound, the artist and his identity. The inspiration for his drawings is often sought in the world of text, from books to comics, which the artist has eagerly consumed since being a child. Childhood appears in fact to be a strong presence in the bodies of work exhibited in *I Believe History Is a Force*: there is a playful element of blurred, though never naïve, reminiscence of early days that each of us can associate with.

In *I Believe History is a Force* the artist will introduce a group of new works. Located on the ground floor is the series entitled *Oreo Group*, as the famous chocolate and cream cookie sandwich, which are a subset of a larger group of text drawings. *Oreo Group* tackles with one of the key themes of his recent practice: that of converging the structures of language and its meaning with familiar materials, studio considerations, and the activity of incessant drawing. These works all begin with a statement based on pre-existing terms that Lewis wrote to declare the past, present, and future of the color line in the United States.

The exhibition also presents, in the lower floor of the gallery, a selection of new collages and works on paper, which aim to celebrate the artist's personal experience of Calvin and Hobbes, the famous American comic by Bill Watterson, by introducing himself into the narrative he was not only passionate about as a child, but still is.

The title of the show *I Believe History is a Force* is a quote from one of these works, that can be found in the small drawing situated in the window space on the ground floor, here the fact that the character who is pronouncing the statement is blacked out will leave the viewer wondering if its Calvin, Hobbes or Tony Lewis himself making the statement.

On the same theme, but following a different direction, are the *Empty Drawings*: an aniconic representation of dialogues from *The Authoritative Calvin and Hobbes* book.

Tony Lewis here uses aniconism, the absence and avoidance of the imagery of God, as a tool to idolize Calvin and Hobbes without using their image: this is a reference to the public history of plagiarism of the comic and at the same time an attempt to provide introspection for the author's work as the true representation of Calvin and Hobbes.

In his work Tony Lewis tackles with a range of subjects that vary from theories such as semiotics to popular culture, questioning through symbolism issues related to the word such as recognition and logic. *I Believe History is a Force* is an overview of Tony Lewis's work: the three series on show illustrate how the artist is able to work on different themes, and depths, aesthetically and conceptually, leaving in the viewer a sense of mystery that the artist creates by shifting in and out of the narrative he creates.



## TONY LEWIS

Tony Lewis was born in Chicago in 1986 where he currently lives and works. He graduated in 2012 from an MFA at the school of the Art Institute of Chicago. Solo exhibitions include: *Art Statement* (with Shane Campbell), Art Basel, Basel, CH (2013); *Bindery Projects*, Saint Paul, Minnesota (2013); *Nine Drawings for Charles*, Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago (2012); *Autumn Space Presents: Tony Lewis*, Autumn Space Gallery, Chicago (2011). Group exhibitions include: *Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2014); *Walls and Words*, Elridge Street Synagogue, New York (2014); *LUMP Projects*, organized by John Neff, Raleigh, NC (2013); *Beyond the Object*, Brand New Gallery, Milan, Italy (2013); *News from Chicago and New York City*, Feibach, Minninger, Cologne, Germany (2012).

## HARD FACTS

Massimo De Carlo, London

55 South Audley Street

London W1K 2QH

From May 30th, 2014 – July 19th, 2014

Open Tuesday to Saturday, 10:00am – 6.00pm

Opening: Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2014

### For further information and materials:

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