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PAUL NOBLE NEW WORKS

Opening reception:
Thursday, November 2, 5–7PM
November 2–December 16, 2017

657 Howard Street
San Francisco, CA 94015

I think like the flat, grey skies of wintery Whitley Bay—tonally. I use very hard pencils, very rarely softer than 4H. Sometimes the pencils are so hard it seems they would rather scratch a hole in the paper than give up their pale graphite.

—Paul Noble

Gagosian is pleased to present new drawings by Paul Noble. This is his first exhibition in San Francisco.

A meticulous visionary, Noble builds encrypted visual universes. Using language as image, and images as a grammatical system of signs, he shows the malleability of all forms of syntax, a legible schema of interlocking words, drawings, and objects. Noble's art presents a reality that *appears* recognizably of our world—but is not. His immersive realms seem to live on beyond

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their immediate visual impression—as in the vast, twenty-year project, *Nobson Newtown*, an imagined environment for which he was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2012, and which was exhibited in its entirety at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, in 2014.

These new works, made since 2015, unfold within flat, planar settings, devoid of the epic scale and spatial breadth that have characterized past drawings. The earliest show a sparse woodland or flat, horizonless outdoor settings. In *EGG LEG* (2015), a giant leg stands within a tiled hexagon in a clearing, dwarfing the surrounding trees. Throughout, signs repeat: the disembodied, intricately drawn and shaded leg eventually makes its way into a shallow, pictorial space without shadow or direct light source; ultimately, these flat, almost non-perspectival interiors, are the center of this exhibition, replacing the landscapes that preceded them. Encased within heavy wooden frames of Noble's own design, which often echo the framed images within the images, the suggestion that a drawing can also be a sculpture, latent in Noble's work, emerges.

The leg stands before doors, in a corridor, entryway, or other interior setting. Oriented toward the right of the picture's edge, it is as though the leg's form conforms with a character being read in left-to-right Greco-Roman alphabetic script. Appearing with other objects: clocks, a cane, a feather, an egg, the inscrutable limb suggests human presence, though remains uncannily disconnected. This feeling of the strangely familiar, preternatural, or unsettling, reminiscent of Surrealism, resonates in Noble's drawings with their quietly decontextualized objects.

Each drawing contains encoded repetitions. Door handles are flat, open hands; keyholes take the same shape as the leg; the clocks mounted on walls and near closed doors all show the same time, 10:45, creating a physical pattern with the clock hands, like a sundial that neither moves nor marks real time. The magician's wand depicted in *WILL* (2016–17) sits, larger than life-sized, in a horizontally oriented frame. The wand, like a typographical dash, or a line made on a page, serves as a mediator, connecting elements that had no previous relationship. In magic, the wand does what a pencil does on paper, causing things to appear from nothing.

With his titles, Noble exploits the sound of the lexeme, as well as what it signifies, with visual and homophonic puns. *C'_OCK* (2016), for instance, shows six clocks, decreasing in size from left to right. Its title, employing an apostrophe and an underscore, makes the alphabetic character L into an image, and physically extends the word "clock" to the same number of glyphs as the there are clocks depicted. *L'Arge D'Oor* (2015), meanwhile, is an overt pun on Luis Buñuel's surrealist film *L'Age d'Or* (1930).

Paul Noble was born in 1963 in Northumberland, England and lives and works in London. Collections include Tate, London, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, UK. Institutional exhibitions include the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (2004); The Migros Museum, Zürich (2005); Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, The Netherlands (2005); "Nobson," Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, The Netherlands (2014), and "Drawing Now," the Albertina Museum, Vienna (2015, traveled to the Museum of Modern Art,

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New York). In 1988 Noble co-found the artist-run space City Racing, in a former betting shop in Kennington, South London. In 2012, he was nominated for the Turner Prize for his solo exhibition at Gagosian, London, which brought together the painstakingly detailed and engrossing drawings of the fictional metropolis Nobson Newtown.

Image: Paul Noble, *1,2,3*, 2015, pencil on paper, artist's frame, 68 1/8 × 55 7/8 × 3 3/4 inches framed (173 × 142 × 9.5 cm) © Paul Noble. Photo by Mike Bruce.

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