

## TONY LEWIS

Engine Insist Itself Nothing Short Etc.

Massimo De Carlo Hong Kong is pleased to present *Engine Insist Itself Nothing Short Etc.* the first exhibition by American artist Tony Lewis in China.

Tony Lewis's practice centres on the relationship between semiotics, language and the universal, creating a narrative that shifts constantly between historical and autobiographical. Graphite pencil and paper are the mediums the artist uses to trace and create abstract narratives and reflections on the notion of the gestural, embodying the artists' research for pure abstraction.

In *Engine Insist Itself Nothing Short Etc.* Tony Lewis will present a group of six large-scale, vibrant, drawings. The Gregg Shorthand graphite form is the primary form and linguistic tool for the drawing: the Gregg Shorthand is a form of stenography that was invented by John Robert Gregg in 1888, like cursive longhand, it is completely based on elliptical figures and lines that bisect them – it is the most popular form of pen stenography in the United States; still in use today albeit less popular due to digitalization.

Each drawing was made to mimic the tightness, precision, and mechanics of a machine. Words are the linguistic foundation for the drawings, and were chosen by the artist specifically because when written in Gregg Shorthand, the language forms are easily mechanized.

The repeated colour scheme (red, yellow, blue, and green) is reminiscent of childhood building blocks to provide a simple, direct contrast between the shapes as they are formed in response to the pre-existing Gregg Shorthand graphite form. The colour shapes purposely follow a loose grid system to imply network of simple machines working together to complete the individual drawings. Wheels, screws, pulleys, inclined planes, and levers are all inspirations for the colour shapes and their spatial functions within the drawing.

Each work in the exhibition is reflective of the precision of current studio labour, consistency of bodily rhythm, and a focused, procedural approach to drawing that results a take on planned yet raw abstraction.

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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* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland in Cleveland (2015); *Bindery Projects*, Saint Paul, Minnesota (2013). Tony Lewis has taken part in group shows among which: *Speech/Acts*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, PA (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 (2013); *News from Chicago and New York City*, Feibach, Minninger, Cologne (2012); *People of Color*, Gene Siskel Film Center, Chicago (2012);. Tony

Lewis has participated in the Whitney Biennial of 2014 at the Whitney Museum of American Art of New York.