

Hannah Barry Gallery
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OLIVER EALES

I enjoy freedom with a regard to common rules
Downstairs at Holly Grove

This autumn we are excited to present a new exhibition of some 70 drawings and a group of new embroideries by Oliver Eales (b. 1982, London, lives and works in Tokyo).

"IRUSU..." if I type that in japanese symbols, it comes straight up as I... RUSU, which is fucking funny cause all of the other english teachers who give themselves japanese names normally go for nice poetic sounding japanese stuff like "Fire mountain king of lake," "Swan soldier brave leader you know symbols with meaning, but mine are "...pretending to hide from someone." which sums up my entire life in London, it just sounds so weak and low and petty, i fucking love it."

This artist's autonomy is delineated by resistance. He says that in both his life and his work, and he considers the two to be inextricably intertwined. In striking against the limits of our freedom we are able to recognise and engage our liberty. Oliver Eales is a firm believer in the indivisibility of freedom. Freedom of action, thought and imagination are not to be considered separately. His aliveness is the greatest symptom of his freedom, and of his enduring resistance to authoritarianism.

His work - filled with extraordinary vitality - will be installed in juxtaposition to selected works by the Russian artist Timur Novikov (1958-2002). The work and vision of this radical figure put us in mind of Oliver Eales when we were in the early stages of planning his exhibition at the gallery not just for the ready comparisons of medium and aesthetic, but for some more interesting correlations: Oliver Eales was one of the key artists consolidating the link between !WOWOW! and Lyndhurst Way in the early 00's. Novikov, a close friend of E.E. (Evgenij Kozlov), whose work we showed here at the gallery in the summer, founded St. Petersburg's 'New Artist Group' in 1982; during the 1980s Timur Novikov was employed at the Russian Museum and enjoyed access to its collection and archive, as well as close working relations with its curators and keepers. In recent works by Oliver Eales we find souvenirs of time spent in Tokyo museums, notably drawing Impressionist and other masterpieces loaned from the Musee d'Orsay in Paris.

"one of them was Dante and Virgil in Hell (I think I changed it to "Dante, Virgil and Oliver in Hell"), and Peste e Rome, (the plague of rome (?), which I wrote on top of "The pest of Tokyo" (bizarrely enough, the japanese use the latin "Pesto" to refer to a disease, so it translates easily to japanese. but in english with my mistranslation, "the pest of tokyo" it sounds much more uncomfortable and twisted. it could refer to the masses of people in the gallery, they are the pest, or me the only person drawing in the gallery, who is the pest, cause even my wife was tutting at me for drawing in the gallery, and before that on that day I was on the subway sewing, and some old lady told me to stop sewing (the train was fucking empty!) and my woman got on her side, I was like "Who the fuck are you? The embroidery police?"")

Matthew Stone, a founder of !WOWOW!, and one of the artists through whom we first met Oliver Eales said “Olie has always had to the ability to occupy a place of authenticity that is separate to the people he surrounds himself with. He is a primary truth-teller in a world that would rather jump off bridges than burn them and that is often defined by limp and passive-aggressive positivities. He is often not politically correct and does not seek to please or apologise, but he is ultimately motivated by a sense of social justice that permeates his whole way of being and art-making. Those that can handle his raw statements and wild humour might reach this core and find forgotten best-parts of themselves reflected back at them too. I am always surprised by the way that Olie's own brand of intellectual cynicism wakes me up when I experience it.”

This exhibition has been realised in collaboration with Leopold Thun & Sasha Galitzine and accompanied by a special programme "The week of four Thursdays".