

The Scene of Instruction

John Chilver

Exhibition: 18.06.21-18.07.21

Times: Friday-Sunday 12-6 & by appointment details to be confirmed.

Coleman Project Space is pleased to present 'The Scene of Instruction', a solo exhibition of new paintings, banners and a video by John Chilver.

With this latest body of work, Chilver refers to histories of thinkers and makers that have employed mathematical operators as part of a rhetorical strategy. He cites Lenin's "communism = the Soviets + electrification", Le Corbusier's "firmness + commodity = delight" and J G Ballard's "the future = sex x technology squared" as examples of this particular mode of presenting social ideas as algebraic data. Similarly, Chilver's slogan equations – the combination of a poetically open instruction within a possibly empirical framework – appear to artistically elevate and thereby critically undermine the processes by which we determine that which is or isn't.

Worked into surreal, compelling figurative narratives on canvas and printed large-scale onto fabric, his expressions are staged in ways that encourage the viewer to think as much about the potential meaning of the content as the context for its delivery. While certain of Chilver's works seem to offer active statements on the current state of things, others use the inequality symbol as allegorical hinge, to highlight a lack of parity between the two halves of the 'equation'.

The history of protest (and its past embodiment within the painted image) naturally looms large, as does that of literary symbolism, given the wealth of characters, motifs and gestures that form part of each encounter. While the printed word on canvas and fabric connects us with the relatively recent art past – the use of text and the slogan as a form of resistance – Chilver's fine, evocative rendering of realistic details and abstract marks takes us on a winding associative journey around the stuff of paint. Certainly we are left with many questions surrounding the 'usefulness' of art and its ability to engage us with the political present.

John Chilver is an artist and writer based in London. Recent projects have included solo exhibitions at Xero, Kline & Coma, London, 2018 and Atlas House, Ipswich, 2019; and group exhibitions Malevolent Eldritch Shrieking, Attercliffe TM, Sheffield, 2018; Dark Lantern, Galerie Sabine Knust, Munich, 2019; Sphinx of Black Quartz Judge My Vow, Palfrey, London, 2020-21. His writings have appeared in Afterall, Art Monthly, Art Papers, Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory, Schizmo, Starship and elsewhere.

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