

Diarmuid Kelley, *Akzidenz-Grotesk*

21 April - 16 May 2017



Diarmuid Kelley b.1972  
*Kangaroo*, 2016  
(detail), oil on linen  
81 by 122 cm

Offer Waterman is delighted to announce an exhibition of new paintings by acclaimed British artist Diarmuid Kelley. Kelley came to prominence at the age of 23, as the youngest ever recipient of the prestigious NatWest Art Prize and his work has attracted a number of notable collectors including HRH The Prince of Wales and the Duke of Devonshire. Offer Waterman has represented Kelley since 1998 and this will be his 7th solo exhibition with the gallery.

The exhibition will include 12 new paintings - studies of the figure, interiors and still life - many of which demonstrate an increased ambition in terms of their scale and complexity. Kelley begins his painting process by creating a carefully orchestrated 'stage' for his subjects to inhabit; various fabrics and props form an almost abstract tapestry of rich or muted colour, which is animated under the carefully modulated natural light. Kelley relates this fascination with the theatrical qualities of painting to the work of Old Masters such as Caravaggio, but also to more contemporary figures - Lucian Freud and Francesca Woodman. 'I was inclined to think that in Freud's work the studio itself becomes a third character in his portraits - as important as the carefully arranged, stage-like interiors of Francesca Woodman's photographs.'

Kelley's interiors combine hints of narrative with a bold use of vivid colour and light, which recall the great works of Van Dyke and William Nicholson. In Kelley's hands, humble and ephemeral subjects, from fruit to autumn leaves, inhabit a silent but eloquent space in time and are portrayed with a rigorous observation of colour and form.

Kelley is rightly celebrated for his portraiture and his work is regularly featured in the BP Portrait Award, for which he has also previously been shortlisted. His subjects range from public figures, including a commission of Sir Richard Thompson for The Royal College of Physicians, to the personal, with many of his friends sitting for the larger works that can take many months to complete.

There is a cinematic dimension to these paintings of friends; narratives that are implied but never revealed. A childhood love of cinema proved an early inspiration for this aspect of Kelley's painting; growing up in the Midlands in the 80s, 'I liked cinematography, photography. I was more struck by cinema than anything else; I grew up looking at old black and white films'.

As we revel in these enigmatic paintings of Karl and Jane, one is also made aware of the timeless narrative which exists between artist and subject in the act of making, a story we complete in the act of viewing.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Offer Waterman opened his first gallery in Chelsea, London in 1996.

Now based in a five-storey Georgian building in the heart of Mayfair, the gallery has developed an international reputation for its exceptional holdings of 20th Century British art. Previously home to the historic William Morris & Co showroom, the gallery at St George Street provides a reposeful and understated exhibition space across four floors.

Offer Waterman's exhibition programme this year will include both contemporary artists and historical exhibitions. Recent projects have included *Frank Auerbach, Early Works* in 2012, *David Hockney, Early Drawings* in 2015 and *Robert Rauschenberg, Transfer Drawings* in 2016.

Offer Waterman is a benefactor of numerous museums and arts organisations, and has provided support to many institutional exhibitions, including the forthcoming *David Hockney* retrospective which opens at Tate Britain on 9 February 2017.

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