

CABINET

KEITH FARQUHAR

Keith is interested in the circulation of objects, how things capture our attention through passive and active consumption and ways to disrupt those relations, that is, to recode and repurpose them as art. This does not derive from the negation of their function like most readymades so much as with their disjunction with our devotion to them as commodities or just accumulated stuff, which in turn occasions a kind of hiatus from our obedience to their utility (and futility) as things in the world. This economy can be seen through a semi-autobiographical prism, and by extension, the figure of the artist, as stand-ins for an urban subject who is subject to endless social prosthetics and empty provisions from a world that doesn't care, one that actively fosters a fast dissolving social body by promoting individuality—creating entrepreneurs of the self—rather than a collective citizenry.

Keith's practice can be broadly broken down into painting and sculpture or rather sculpture (or anti-sculpture) and image-making: a practice that references painting but without traditional painterly mark-making, where painting can be understood as a generic stand-in for all art, an index of sorts. The corrugated paintings (2012 – ongoing), such as the *Brains*, *Woolmark*, or *Double Amy*, are printed with ink directly on galvanised steel, where, because the support surface is fluted, the paint appears both sprayed and directly applied, i.e., hand painted. This procedure results in industrially produced 'artistic gestures', which comment upon Christopher Wool's and others own anti-iconographic, graffiti-style painterly pursuits but also, due to the steel support, suggests a relation to the street, the gallery as well as the distribution of images on the Internet, an orphaned signifier of sorts. Similarly, with the *Cut-Out Nudes* series (2009-13), made from applying body paint to models, photographing them, resulting in stand-alone, flat-pack photographic sculptures that detail backs, bottoms and torsos: collapsing painting, sculpture and photography collapse, flatness with volume. Likewise, with his *Nudes in Colour* performances (*Cycling Shorts*, 2013-16), a man is stationed in one of his exhibitions,

'wearing' painted on cycling shorts exposing themselves not unlike like a life model or the carrier bag paintings (*Plastic Wrap*, 2013), where screened images of individual coloured plastic bags on canvas become abstract post-minimalist paintings.

The found objects Keith repurposes or remakes as sculpture are so ubiquitous that they are almost invisible or incidental to art like corporate logos, hoodies, posters, baby seats, meditation apps and sleeping bags. For the *Gore-Texerotic*, *Skinheads* or *Hoodies* series (2003-05), Keith has fashioned these eponymous materials, figures and garments, respectively, which stand alone or with wooden supports, such that they become lifelike social types through sheer mundanity (the former) or through mythologised (and stigmatised) menace (the latter two). A more recent social type can be seen in the *Lap God* series (2016-18), portraits of 'beggars' where an inverted sleeping bag is attached to the wall, with a soft toy sleeping dog on a cushion and a branded paper cup placed on the floor to either side. These series illustrate Keith's interest in marginalised social types, which could be a proxy for the figure of the artist, the precarity artists endure, or now, like most people in general. They also clearly relate to the role of social exclusion in society, how it might be reproduced, for example, through gentrification, raising the issue of social conscience and how it is reproduced and instrumentalised.

For his first Cabinet show, Keith has installed a collection of works inspired by his daily life in Edinburgh, and by extension, life in the UK in general. These objects have been transformed, remade or adapted and centre on himself, and any one, as a person, artist, consumer and citizen, bringing these subject positions together, or at least questioning them individually, to see what they might mean taken together. Although employed by almost everyone, these objects counter-intuitively possess a kind of attraction in their banality: when a common object is observed long enough it takes on other values, other meanings and nuances.

One could say the focus of Keith's show is the body, his body, any body and how it is manipulated through processes of consumption in the widest sense possible. Take for example, the Brains (all

works Untitled, 2018): these works are produced by the artist with two spray cans simultaneously, using left and right hands, left and right brain, first on paper (Black Brain) then transferred by printing the image on to corrugated steel (Red Brain). Another group of works focus on the gym or wellness, where the body is meant to be transformed in the name of physical fitness and good mental health. Here we see a swimming pool time table blurrily printed as if under water and greatly enlarged on to corrugated steel, dividing the body through time and activity; wooden sauna benches to sweat out bodily toxins; a hair dryer station for personal grooming; a looped hidden camera video of a gym shot at an oblique angle; an inverted crowd control barrier/towel rack; and portable baby seat sculptures harnessed to steel rods or repurposed as a ceiling suspended chandelier.

Edinburgh Leisure is the name of Keith's current audio-visual project—he was once lead singer in the 90s band The Male Nurse—named after the public/private chain of local fitness centres, where health and urban lifestyle are promoted through 'self-optimisation' as yet another element of all-encompassing consumer life. This is borne out by the band's visual assault of corporate logos (RBS, BBC, NHS and Pornhub) on video screens controlled by the pulsating electronic music itself.