

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Inaugural exhibition: Bruce Conner, Steve McQueen, Catherine Opie, Caragh Thuring, Kelley Walker

Thomas Dane Gallery
Via Francesco Crispi, 69
Napoli

Opening night: 24 January 2018, 7–9pm

Exhibition dates: 25 January – 24 March 2018

For the inaugural exhibition at Thomas Dane Gallery in Naples, five rooms of the renovated Casa Ruffo have been dedicated to five artists whose work, whether literally or allegorically, draws inspiration or substance from Naples, or our *idea* of Naples.

Each room is dedicated to a single artist. The works on view by Bruce Conner, Steve McQueen, Catherine Opie, Caragh Thuring and Kelley Walker, echo and illustrate – each in their own way – the bustling, hedonistic beauty of the city; a place where old and new collide, and where urgency for life coexists with a looming sense of mortality.

Bruce Conner's last completed masterpiece *EASTER MORNING*, 2008, is a metaphysical paean to renewal and rebirth beyond the natural and ephemeral worlds. The film is an expansion and adaptation of his 1966 film *EASTER MORNING RAGA*. Conner digitized and extended the 8mm footage, manipulating the frame rate to create a dizzying effect of visual transcendence, moving in rhythm to the hypnotic instrumental chant of Terry Riley's composition *In C*, 1964. Lens flares act as a compositional force driving the movement of the film through close-ups of seemingly unconnected images – plants, a nude woman, a view from a window, an arabesque carpet, a burning candle – which, when taken together, impress a dream-like evocation of time and place.

In Steve McQueen's silent 16mm film *Running Thunder*, 2007, a horse lies in a meadow, the grass around it is gently disturbed by a breeze. A fly circles and then crawls over the horse's open eye but there is no reaction. We soon realise that the eye does not blink and the horse does not move. The medium of film, defined by time and motion, is pulled up short by McQueen's static motif: a *nature morte*, or *still life*. Playing on the contradictory associations of speed and power inherent in the title, *Running Thunder* is a vanitas, a meditation on time and mortality and the possibilities of transcendence of death through the medium of film.

Catherine Opie shows a group of works from the series with which she shot to prominence in the mid-1990s: a spectacular sequence of studio portraits which navigate gender and identity through studies of her close

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friends in the West Coast leather community. The language of Old Master painting has imbued the portraits Opie has made throughout her career, an idea developed in these early works. With their formal compositions and rich monochromatic backgrounds the portraits imbue their often marginalised subjects with a regal dignity, calling to mind the history of Italian Renaissance and Baroque portraiture, and the grandeur of courtly Naples.

Caragh Thuring has returned to a motif recurrent in her practice - the volcano - to create two new works for the exhibition *Day and Night*, both 2017. Although loosely constructed around similar themes they differ greatly in style and technique. Typical of Thuring's work, *Day's* speculative environment is rendered with an economy of means that leaves large tracts of empty linen, lending the work the serenity and harmony of a 19th Century Japanese print. In contrast, *Night* is more densely composed: a fiery and energetic explosion of drama and colour constructed by layering traces of previous works and motifs. In one area the brickwork of one of Thuring's earlier woven paintings creates a composite layering of old and new, assimilating a mechanised industrial process and handcraft.

Kelley Walker has created a new group of works especially for the exhibition, also mining subjects and ideas from his own work. Drawing on Naples' rich art history, Walker looks to the culturally active period following the Irpinia earthquake of 1980, when Lucio Amelio (1931-1994) brought many international contemporary artists to Naples, who, in turn, became in awe of its creative charge. Walker uses as his starting point the iconic exhibition poster of Andy Warhol and Joseph Beuys' joint exhibition at Galleria Lucio Amelio that year, showing them side by side with the civic lions of Piazza dei Martiri. Using the image of the lion and Warhol's hand as a unifying ground, Walker fractures it through processes of digital corruptions and manipulations - the effect is almost as if strata of personal and local histories have been excavated to uncover the fragments of a frieze. Conceived as architectonic features within the room, Walker's photo-objects are like columns and architraves that activate the space, creating narratives that echo the real life layering of histories of the city.

For exhibitions and sales enquiries please contact Federica Sheehan: federica@thomasdanegallery.com

Gallery Hours:

Tuesday to Friday 11am-7pm

Saturday 12pm-7pm

or by appointment

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