

OSCAR ENBERG

Sire So-and-So or Richard Pågen

Opening: 9 October, 5-8 pm

Exhibition period ends: 8 November 2014

Gallery opening hours: Wednesday-Friday 12-5.30 pm, Saturday 12-4 pm

Sire so-and-so's generic flourish isn't the preserve of the malicious day-dreamer of Hans Arp's poem "The Barren Lea". That little so-an-so might pulverise his parakeet to get what he wants, but you'll find another more sardonic and yet entirely generic quality in Richard Pågen, a conjunction that joins both the daily bread of *the* Swedish bakery and its English translation as "boy", with the loose proverbial slang whereby Richard stands in for the arrogant rich-boy, the little sire.

This set-up introduces something of a biographical note to Enberg's narrative, ushering in a baroque, even grotesque flavour to what is increasingly being read as a kind of film treatment. That is, more and more Oscar Enberg's work takes on qualities of a dramatic arc, in which his sculptures are said to be not just props but actors in and of themselves. Thus, even though our little sire is so obviously absent from the scene it makes sense to write of Enberg's show as revolving around this most persuasive of actors, especially given that the point of this generic flattening is to call attention to the overlap in which our little rich-boy's actions might be viewed as symptomatic of a wider culture.

Now, if we take our cue from the bulbous abstractions of Hans Arp that Enberg's sculptures so eagerly quote, we can sense that this narrative is always meant to be stretched, to swell and retract. Every route between two relations supposes as much. So of course we shouldn't be surprised to meet such an array of modifiers, nor to see that our little rich-boy's spiteful procedures might be picked apart by the narrative. Dough rises after all, adapting to inflationary behaviours so that even symptomatic attitudes are forces that adjust and mould. Surely then the injection of daily bread into our little rich-boy's system, into his combustion means as much?

But perhaps we should simplify the schema and detail just two of the major players, the first being the rich brat's tycoon lineage, here channelled through, Monopoly's Rich Uncle Pennybags, an iconic industrialist whose flair looks positively anachronistic in an age when archetypes like Rockefeller are ditching oil for renewable energy sources. Say what you will of cynical means, but such lineage doesn't just vanish, it's what props up the narrative in the first place. Which is why Enberg's introduction of a second modifier, that of Dan Conner, the put-upon diminutive patriarch of the U.S sitcom *Rosanne*, isn't just a stand in for blue collar labour but also the comically malnourished values of a culture of convenience.

So of course such dichotomies, an agent with means (our rich boy's uncle) an agent without (Conner) face off through the intermediary of Hans Arp, loosely standing in as the paradigmatic cultural worker who doesn't just bridge both worlds but often acts as its gatekeeper. Consequently, Arp dangles not daily bread, but the casual banality of Russian roulette, so that all three characters sit around a table dallying with the chance of death *and* the opportunity of life, with all its riches. No wonder then, that Enberg props open a willow cane chest only meters away. After all, such a vault serves as easily to hoard the winners' spoils as it does to bury the bodies that ultimately belie most victories.

Oscar Enberg (1988) graduated from University of Canterbury's Ilam School of Fine Arts in 2010 and now lives and works in Auckland. Recent exhibitions include: *The Pynchons S01E02: Slouching Towards Dignity*, Hopkinson Mossman, Auckland (2014); *The Good Father and The Rich Uncle* (Hopkinson Mossman) Liste Art Fair, Basel (2014); *The Pynchons S01E01*, Gloria Knight, Auckland (2013); *Reduced Options for Juergen's House*, Gloria Knight, Auckland (2012); *Returned Merchandise and Joke Seconds*, Artspace, Auckland (2012).

Hamish Win

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