

Frieze

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Zin Taylor / 1646, The Hague, the Netherlands

by Vivian Sky Rehberg

It looks like 'The Illustrator' got hungry while he was drawing on the pristine white gallery walls. Judging from his drawings, it appears 'The Illustrator' likes sandwiches – a retro, stacked club, spiked through with an olive-topped cocktail stick, could be a preference, but a squishy cheeseburger might also do. I can relate. At work, I often wish I could conjure up the food I imagine, and that it would pop out of my mind and into my hand just like it does in cartoons.

These may be Zin Taylor's thoughts materializing around the project space 1646, but he would prefer that we don't confuse him, the artist, with the namesake of his show. At least that's what he asserted in a prefatory conversation with artist Scott Lyall, which was also published for the occasion. The protocol at 1646 calls for each exhibition to be accompanied by a printed transcript of a conversation between the artist and an unfamiliar partner, and 'a background night' presenting the artists' ideas and practice. This laudable effort is meant to introduce the audience to the work, and to situate the exhibition itself in a process, rather than see it as the end game.

According to Taylor, if 'The Illustrator' is a character, he is one that embodies 'an idea', 'a title' and 'a tool for a certain kind of description'. But remaining in this conceptual realm – rather than anthropomorphizing Taylor's designated idea, title and tool – is far from easy. I couldn't resist the urge to attribute authorship to the elements in this exhibition, which consisted of larger-than-life (mostly) figurative line drawings directly on the gallery walls made with a 15mm chisel-head black acrylic marker. To be painted over when the exhibition ends, they could be seen as grammatical units in a pictorial phrase or as continuous visual composition, depending on how synthetically or partially one reads. In addition, black dots were scattered over one wall (a sure nod to Taylor's ongoing body of work known as 'The Story of Stripes and Dots', begun in 2012), and two sculpture-mobiles drifted in that peculiar, passive way when an air current happened to disturb them.

The first mobile was the sole occupant of the front gallery space and is succinctly described by its title: *A string of eyeballs, a spectrum of colour, a structure of form in black and white* (2013). Two upside-down L-shapes hung from one side of a thin horizontal bar painted the colours of the spectrum: the thicker upside-down L-shape was white and covered with a black grid; the other, reedier L was solid black. Their companion, a long chain of papier-mâché eyeballs threaded onto string, reminding me of one of those elastic candy bracelets you can nibble on. Dramatically lit, the mobiles' wavering shadows swished around the walls and floor, as if cast from a magic lantern. The second mobile, *Expressive Device (Leaf Voids)* (2014), had four white discs dangling from an invisible wire and hung in the back space, but it was overshadowed by a wall-drawing of what looked like a giant potato.

In the accompanying conversation with Lyall, Taylor refers to the drawings as 'caricatures' and to the gallery space as a 'void' – terms analogous with 'writing' and 'thinking' that help him to identify a distinctive style of mark-making that emerges from pensive moments (which others might refer to as doodling). An ostrich, an alphabet and a squat brick structure set amidst sparse blades of grass populate one wall. There's no real point in trying to cohere all the wall drawings into a narrative but it is tempting to play that game with the image of two hippies and a third figure, comprised only of legs and a body dissolving into bubbly vapour, standing beside a drawn mini-exhibition of works resembling some other 'real' sculptures and paintings by Taylor. To illustrate means to provide clarity or enlighten through an example. With this exhibition, Taylor effectively turned the walls into a recursive and dynamic space, a setting for artistic thinking, rather than merely a surface for inscribing shapes.



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