

REVIEWS



TORONTO
SUSAN HOBBS GALLERY

KRISTA BUECKING

by Rosemary Heather

KRISTA BUECKING LOVE
SONG FOR A FUTURE
GENERATION #2 2009
Graphite on paper
82 cm x 1.41 m overall
PHOTO TONI HAFKENSCHIED

"Under the paving stones the beach!" So goes the slogan from Paris in May 1968: dismantle civilization and you will find paradise. For her show at Susan Hobbs Gallery, Krista Buecking looks at the brick as a trope of cultural upheaval, in the process suggesting a way to understand the political uncertainties of our time. As an artist, she finds freedom in her ability to draw. As a thinker, she sees reasons to be circumspect. The end result is a series of diptychs that caution us: revolutions are never without their consequences.

You can't throw a rock without hitting something; that's what it means to be part of society. Under the paving stones lie not the beach, but other responsibilities. Making drawings of lyrics from popular songs, Buecking suggests to us what these might be. "That's when your heartaches begin," one drawing reminds us. "There goes my everything," laments another work. In a third, Buecking renders Elvis Presley's "Are You Lonesome Tonight?" without its question mark; as a result, we read the familiar refrain less as query, more as cultural artifact. Within American pop songs Buecking has located deeper truths about the culture that produced them. Endless change and a taste for the ephemeral have produced the conditions for a rootless population.

Paired with each lyric is a drawing of a brick, hanging in blank space as if flying through the air. Drawn with uncommon skill, and given weight through sheer graphite denseness, the bricks persuasively mimic the real thing. The artist cites as an influence the transcendent yearning evident in the work of Isamu Noguchi. Vija Celmins also comes to mind, perhaps only because Buecking more than matches the exceptional technical drawing facility for which Celmins is known.

Each diptych presents song lyric and brick next to one another. Even though both are frozen in time, fragments that evoke disparate larger contexts, together the drawings depict a world falling apart. Buecking suggests this by dismantling the picture plane: the drawings hang awkwardly at right angles to one another, text and image interlocking like paving stones. It is a compositional arrangement that provokes discomfort, but in the ambiguity of the relationship lies the potential for change. The works point to what we see being dismantled today: not buildings but hierarchies. We live in a time that seems chaotic and paralyzed in equal measure. In this show, Buecking finds a way to dramatize the implications of this: our collective step into the unknown.