



TORONTO  
Krista Buecking  
SUSAN HOBBS GALLERY

HURT ME NOW GET IT OVER; TOMORROW WILL BE TOO LATE; THERE GOES MY EVERYTHING: Such is the sad language of classic ballads that Krista Buecking employs, with characteristic Conceptualist rigor, in the drawing series "LOVE SONGS FOR A FUTURE GENERATION" (all works 2009). Rendered in tiny strokes of graphite, each statement appears sideways in vertical columns of

italicized block letters and is paired with a pencil drawing of a battered piece of brick. Scanning each coupling slowly, one reaps rich rewards from the friction between these fragmentary bits of stone and syntax—forms that compete with one another, compositionally and semantically, in their separate frames of equal size.

Beat-up bricks here function as surprising metaphors for classic ballads, particularly those first-person dirges sung by scorned lovers. In LOVE SONG FOR A FUTURE GENERATION #2, for example, the toll taken by failed romance may be transferred from Dusty Springfield's words YOU DON'T HAVE TO STAY FOREVER to a highly detailed, monochrome terrain that bears evidence of wear and tear, including cracks and subtler atmospheric neglect; evidence of suffering marks an object that is utterly alone—but for the accompanying bit of text—cast off from the mortar that once wedded it to a wall, to others, or to an institution. What remains is a brittle thing that lacks integrity, that pleads without pride for attention, and yet manages to survive with a glistening graphite sheen.

In addition to such plaintive tones, Buecking's project strikes notes of playful absurdity. Lowly victims of the wrecking ball are ennobled, presented in a repetitive and rigorous fashion against pristine white grounds; smudges and blemishes are nowhere to be seen in the empty void. Cleanly decontextualized on the page, the bricks retain only minimal iconographic baggage. Buecking herself associates these fragments—represented by an accumulation of basic pencil strokes so laborious and intense that it tests the integrity of the paper—with those hardworking musicians of blue-collar origins, including Elvis Presley and Patsy Cline, who crooned the lyrics quoted throughout her series. These larger-than-life stars led extravagant lives that contrasted with their humble origins to a dramatic degree—a radical difference between past and present expressed here through the playful juxtaposition of overwrought songs and utterly banal bricks.

In their pairing of image and text, Buecking's works most directly recall Conceptualists such as John Baldessari and Douglas Huebler. Also relevant are artists such as Sylvia Plimack Mangold, who in her process-oriented paintings of the 1960s painstakingly rendered ordinary floorboards in a Photorealist style, faithful (or so they appear) to every grain of wood. Buecking's method may also be associated with multiple media, as she works from high-definition digital photographs of her sculptural subjects. This mediation provides an added element of procedural restraint and emotional distance—a cold literalism that operates in pleasing tension with the heartfelt lyrics of a love song. The simple elegance of Buecking's work is far from simplistic, especially for those who are willing to spend time reflecting metaphorically, both visually and verbally.

—Dan Adler

Artforum, April 2010