

For Want of (not) Measuring

Kingsgate Projects is pleased to present *For Want of (not) Measuring* which brings together artists Jim Hobbs and Patrick Adam Jones, who both explore the problematic and poetic use of systems and measurement. Whereas measure often focuses on quantitative results, the two artists instead choose a more metaphysical approach to exploit the corporeal use of measuring apparatus. Here, surveying sticks, physical grids and light meters (amongst many other tools) are all used to point out the futility, absurdity and impossibility of truly knowing the world around us. What began as a conversation between the two artists about the overlapping territories of each other's interests has led to a collaborative installation where the works actively seek out resonance via proximity in space

The first works encountered in the space, *25 fc* and *22.5 fc*, are two small photographs by Hobbs that document a 1930's foot candle meter. This apparatus was designed to measure the appropriate luminosity of certain interior conditions for safe working. However, in these photographs, the lighting conditions seem to stay the same while the meter's needle moves – captured by lowering the lighting conditions whilst increasing the length (time) of exposure. Ultimately these object/images speak of duration, observation and sensitivity.

On the large wall, Patrick Adam Jones has created an immense installation of drawings and framed photographs with ink overlays of text. The mass of images nailed to the wall is entitled *How heavy is your mountain* and consists of hundreds of drawings, spawning from Jones' interest in the Schiehallion Experiment. In the 18th century, scientists set out to measure the mean density of the Earth. They worked around the perimeter of Schiehallion mountain in Scotland to try and measure variations based on gravitational pulls from nearby mountains.

The idea that mountains would pull a plumb-line from the vertical was already set out by Isaac Newton (1687) in the third book of his Principia where he showed that all three of Kepler's laws were the consequence of the inverse square law of gravitational attraction. He gave as an example a hemispherical mountain 3 miles high and 6 miles broad which he said would deflect a pendulum somewhat less than 2 arcmin (actually 1/18" if the mountain had the same density and the mean density of the Earth). Newton concluded that such deflections by mountains would be too small to measure. However, over the next 100 years advances in astronomical and surveying techniques made possible such measurements in the hands of a careful observer of which Nevil Maskelyne was the quintessential example. (A Commemoration of Maskelyne at Schiehallion, R.D. Davies, 1985)

The drawings which make up *How heavy is your mountain* are part scientific hypothesis and part ironic self-postulation. Working on top of the indexes from old atlases, the work acts as a palimpsest but also a locator and generator. The writing which overlays many of the drawings, often reflects Jones' own paradoxical line of enquiry – an internal questioning about an outside world while the mark making suggests the necessity of physically figuring things out.

To take the work even further, Jones' decided to visit and climb Schiehallion to conduct his own futile experiments of measuring and document the journey through the use of vintage stereoscopic cameras. Carrying a large surveying stick up the mountain, Jones became a shamanic figure, linking the past with the present, the absurd with the real, in a desire to measure *something*. The resulting images have become the base material for the *Schiehallion Series* – framed photographs, some of which have subtly drawn numbers, marks and measurements across them. These works include references to a type of landscape Romanticism of the 19th century while also maintaining a genuine sense of awareness, beauty and awe. High on the opposite wall is the work *Stupid as an artist measuring a mountain*, where Jones seems to sum up the entirety of his oeuvre.

Underneath this work is *Nyx (mapping the night sky)*, a 16mm film by Hobbs created over 4 nights on the Greek island Hydra. Manually filming frame-by-frame from dusk to dawn, the night sky's movement was captured through quasi-grid like structures made of string. The linear

elements infer a type of DIY measuring mechanism that is both useful and imperfect but also nods towards the drawing of constellations; mythmaking in the night sky. When presented on a 2x2 video wall, the screens become both another form of grid and a window through which to see.

In the darkened space, *Between the Clouds* & *Between the Daisies* are two more of Jones' photographic works echoing the work in the lighter space but becoming more intimate in dim light. Additionally, two more of Hobbs' foot candle photographs, 2 fc & 3.5 fc, exist in the periphery at the back of the space, referencing the shift in luminosity.

Centrally located in the space is the video installation entitled $\frac{H^{xy}}{V^z} = \emptyset$. This work stems from Hobbs' interest in the nocturnal and the use of artificial lighting to create or enhance an augmented form of vision. The recollected experience of being blinded by lights while driving at night is the catalyst for a series of loosely linked moving images and graphics which in turn create a type of hallucinatory experience. The video is projected onto a monumental blackboard surface which has been enhanced with a hand-drawn grid made with engineers' chalk. The structure/screen relates to Hobbs' father's work at General Electric, where automotive lighting was tested out by projecting street scenes onto a gridded wall and then shining head lamps onto it – measuring the technical/numerical/visual range of the light while also destroying the superficially projected image. With $\frac{H^{xy}}{V^z} = \emptyset$, this destruction/dismantling of image through projection onto a marked grid creates a physically disorientating experience. The end result is akin to dreaming as described by Louis Ferdinand Celine: 'Dreams rise in the darkness and catch fire from the mirage of moving light. What happens on the screen isn't quite real; it leaves open a vague cloudy space for the poor, for dreams and the dead.' (Journey to the End of the Night, 1932)

Emanating throughout the space is the sound piece *Everything that's important goes on in darkness*. For this, Hobbs collected sounds using an electromagnetic microphone to pick up invisible sonic currents from light sources including automotive lamps and handheld torches which were then run through a variety of analogue effects pedals and digital filters. These audio files were then mixed by Jono Crabbe into the final sound piece. The landscape of this composition sits in direct relationship to all of the other works within the exhibition.

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