

G E O R G K A R G L

Angus FAIRHURST „DYSUNIVERSAL“

Georg Kargl, Vienna, November, 11th 2004 – January, 9th 2005

We`ve been this way before, haven`t we?

Over the past 15 years, Angus Fairhurst has developed different strands of ideas and works, constantly re-visiting, re-thinking and re-working, often to such a degree that one work or group of works might have no apparent formal properties in common with any of the other. Painting, performance, animation, photography, video, sculpture, prints, wallpaper, drawings and collages, all artistic means are used. While constantly developing and revising these ideas contradictions are openly present not by default but rather by intent.

From the outset Angus Fairhurst has played with the viewer`s expectations, creating possibilities within the impossible - or in his own words, operating in „a false dawn on the road to personal and artistic freedoms“. Like the recurring motif of the banana skin, Fairhurst`s work moves on slippery ground, possible meaning is always confronted with its own travesty, its own comedy; or as with the banana - possible references implicit - what is left is often only the skin. There is a simultaneous doing and undoing – „keep adding until you can`t add anything else, take everything away until there is nothing left.“ The staging and the failing of expectations is one of the recurring themes in Fairhurst`s work - any possibility is always injected with an excess of doubt, with its own critique, its own sense of inappropriateness. „I am not trying to pull the wool over anyone`s eyes, or set anything up that is impermeable, everything that is done reveals itself. There is, or there should be no illusion in the making of any structure. Every step on the way is clear and each step is in itself quite banal, even quite an obvious step to make. Whatever happens, however, happens between each step.“

This approach of doing, and undoing, of self-revelation and humorous self-contradiction, becomes also apparent when reading some of Fairhurst`s titles, like „Low Expectations, Lower Expectations, Lowest Expectations“; „Fainter and Fainter“; „The Missing Link“; „Underdone/Overdone“; „Things that don`t work properly, things that never stop“; „Inflated, deflated“; „Some went mad, some ran away“; „A cheap and ill-fitting gorilla suit“; „My house fell down but now I can see the stars“; „A couple of differences between thinking and feeling“; „Man who wants to know what the back of his head looks like“; „Abandabandon“; „Dysuniversal“.

Conclusions, in the sense of discursive clarity, are rejected; they might not only horrify Fairhurst they would also simplify and suffocate his practice, underlining his belief that any one picture of the world (or within) can never be complete, the world of a happy man is a different one from that of an unhappy man, inevitably only the total sum of realities is and can represent the world. What Fairhurst does, also and of course not always, is staging and subsequently failing those normative expectations of completion or artistic accomplishment.

His most recent works such as „Six Billboards, Body and Text Removed“, (2004) combine and make parallel approaches already present in earlier works, such as „All Evidence of Man Removed“, from 1992 onwards in which he removed all the figures and man-made elements from postcards, or the over-layering of different structures, as present in works such as „Low Expectations, Lower Expectations, Lowest Expectations“, (1997) in which patterns are so densely overlapped that each single structure becomes harder to read. This illegibility, this dense and opaque text has left its original references behind. „It`s like saying a word over and over again until it loses its meaning, and then gets it back again. The sheer sense of the parallel is always exhilarating. That sudden moment of recognition, being suddenly brought out and suddenly thrown back in again.“

Stefan Kalmar

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