

Aesthetica

Review of Ivan Seal: In Here Stands It, Spike Island, Bristol



In his first large-scale solo exhibition in Britain, Berlin based Ivan Seal presents a collection of paintings exploring his take on the still life genre. Small to medium size canvasses are showcased with ever-increasing density: sparsely dotted on the walls of the first gallery, the works start to converge in the adjoining spaces, ultimately flourishing in an almost congested ribbon of paintings in the central gallery. Along with computer generated sound works, Seal's paintings will be appear in *In Here Stands It*, until 9 December at **Spike Island**, Bristol.

The visual works are set against the auditory accompaniment of simultaneously playing sound pieces: the recordings aim to prevent the imposition of meaning on the visual works associated with traditional exhibition guides. The looped recitation of nonsensical lists of words, randomly generated by a computer, negates the possibility of a predetermined interpretation of each work – a negation reflected by the equally non-predicative titles given to the works.

Seal's still lifes range from the instantly recognisable, to the distorted version of the familiar, to the entirely abstract. Each subject exudes an unsettling quality, underscored by the ambiguity with which the background plain is rendered. Particular poignancy imbues works such as *horaglycoptrun shelved* and *off her head again* in which the daubed, practically sculptural paint has an effervescent, almost lifelike energy; but ultimately, the subject remains undefined and undefinable, dislodged from everyday space and time.

In effect, Seal's practice rejects the traditional approach to still life as a faithful depiction of a moment in time, rendered into a memory through the very act of being depicted. Instead of the mournful contemplation of the inevitable passage of time, he opts for an approximation of a memory, achieved by representing an integrating totality of recollections rather than an imperfect representation of the negotiated subject in a singular state.

Ivan Seal: *In Here Stands It*, running until 9 December, **Spike Island**, 133 Cumberland Road, Bristol, BS1 6UX.

Regina Papachlimitzou

Credits

1. Ivan Seal, *chesh* (2012). Courtesy Carl Freedman Gallery and RaebervonStenglin.
2. Ivan Seal, *chingvelcifism by lsd* (2012). Courtesy Carl Freedman Gallery and RaebervonStenglin.
3. Ivan Seal, *cockrontdedpacmanwell tarrrt* (2012). Courtesy Carl Freedman Gallery and RaebervonStenglin.
4. Ivan Seal, *draggene perable (drunk in a car no4)* (2011). Courtesy Carl Freedman Gallery and RaebervonStenglin.

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