

Kyle Jenkins Enigmatic Reductive Dialogue

Written by Dr Billy Gruner - Modern Art Projects, Sydney Jan 2017.

The current *Position Point* collaged / reductive painting works of Kyle Jenkins reflect directly upon the significant post-punk influences on his life where his DIY underground aesthetic meets rigid visual art conceptual intention. He is a contemporary artist whose practice broaches both his visual art and growing musical career in the band, *Suicide Swans*. For every exhibition involving his *Position Point* paintings he draws upon a particular musician/band as their aesthetic creativity / artistic decisions become a signifier for the intention of the paintings through a type of visual collaboration between Jenkins and for this series of paintings at Alexandra Lawson Gallery the American underground cult band *The Brian Jonestown Massacre*.

The Brian Jonestown Massacre is an American psychedelic rock band formed in San Francisco in 1990 led by front man Anton Newcombe. The BJM began and very quickly rose to become underground legends of psychedelic punk. This group for one thing clearly references a certain period, a time and place that in many ways corresponded with Jenkins own arrival in the contemporary Australian art world. In Australia (like 1990's in the USA/San Francisco) was a complex place/arts scene undergoing considerable change and facing cultural challenges. It was certainly amidst an exciting coterie of likeminded reductive artists that Jenkins produced a wide array of exhibitions incorporating installations, wall works, undertook university research and participated in Avant music performances. All this while filtering these interests into a plethora of really fine reductive paintings that have been exhibited and collected worldwide.

Presently Jenkins lives in Toowoomba Queensland, a gateway township located on the important Darling Downs, near Brisbane, where he lectures on Historical and Contemporary art. Toowoomba is for many others an auspicious place as it is generally regarded the physical location of the origination of punk music in Australia. It is a town that also marks a subtler connection for Jenkins because in a similarly and quite profoundly resistant way the current paintings he makes are very Australian. They are critically visceral and conceptually driven by a long-term engagement with reductive art practices whilst holding their own vernacular in place, in short they are

unmistakably 'his works' that action themselves as both objects to ponder and as images of urban cultural experience cleverly producing a unique collage of emotions, interests, intentions and profound resolution.

For Jenkins an exotic regional legacy of pure abstractionist interests as American Modernist theorist Clement Greenberg once said of Australian abstraction and international influences are seen in his earlier works that nowadays meets a refreshed and maturing pastiche of references. The key tone of sub-cultural activity, all somehow seminal to a 1970s arrival of challenging ideas, remains topically in play in Jenkins unique works. Put another way, on one hand here we find a 'new wave' of critical styles in his paintings and approaches to both art and music expressly pronouncing the flavor and tone of the band *The Brian Jonestown Massacre* by example, and on the other find a regional aesthetic response all of its own design. Interestingly, Jenkins continues to ably connect us to an assured consensus on what 'new painting practices' after the 20th Century should be like, and that is expressed simply through a clear signature of radical stylisations. It is radical because of their intention, method of construction and reason for being. The paintings visually push 'us' the viewer to re: think the connections between what we see, what we know and what should / could become of these connections. In this exhibition at ALG we are presented with images that are hidden, embedded, deconstructed and covered over by shards of hard edge colours that could form patterns but also act as a form of conceptual demarcation. This series of paintings are representational, but not 'image as picture'. Instead we must look past what we first recognize and instead embrace, like Jenkins, the intentions of these decisions where each painting works within itself to push the role of representational aesthetics, not as image, but as what this represents within a personalized DIY, underground, radical conceptual and cultural subterfuge.