

Ringbinder

Jeffrey Dennis

Curated by Andrew Hunt

The Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art is pleased to present 'Ringbinder', a solo exhibition by Jeffrey Dennis, which will consist of a new series of paintings and sculpture housed in NGCA's reconfigured main gallery space. Aside from staging a concentrated progression of the artist's work made between 2011 and 2015, the exhibition will attempt to reflect on Dennis' development since his initial profile in Britain was formed during the early 1980s. This was a period that saw a significant international resurgence in painting in parallel with the 'New Image Painting' in North America and the 'Jungen Wilden' (Young Wild Ones) in Germany, both of which were considered counter-movements to Conceptual Art.

As if referencing a synthesis of this historical polarity, Dennis' painting *The Artist Successfully Levitating in the Studio* (2011) pictures a full-length self-portrait in mid-air surrounded by a plethora of psychedelic bubbles. A reversal of the great conceptual artist Bruce Nauman's *Failing to Levitate in My Studio* (1966), *The Artist Successfully...* presents an impossible and affirmative act against (what one might call) certain canonized 'labourer priests of the negative', such as Nauman and Samuel Beckett, in whose work failure's gravity exerts its pull everywhere. In essence, Dennis' minor comic triumph countervails negative forms of motion through a sense of revelatory wonder and aspiration.

Other subject matter includes graphic Bengali cinema posters, images from a technical handbook of fixtures and fittings retrieved from a skip in the 1970s, as well as films such as Jean Luc Godard's self-conscious critique of consumerism *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*; reference points that provide the artist with the tools for constructing enchanted visual spaces in his strange objects. Surrounded by Dennis' signature painted bubbles – a device originally taken from a scene in Godard's film in which froth on a cup of coffee dissipates – the artist transforms the micro to the macro; a situation in which we travel from foam in a washing-up bowl to different points in inter-galactic space.

Dennis has recently developed a number of new three-dimensional objects that act as portable multi-faceted stage sets. Studded with vignette painted imagery, each 'sculpture' contains a narrative that springs from popular events taken from television, newspapers and his own photographs. Personal and political histories are exemplified in a work that refers to the area of north London in which the artist lives, through the depiction of a flower-monument at the inconspicuous site of the shooting that sparked the nationwide riots of 2011, as well as drawing reference to Tottenham's Broadwater Farm riots twenty-six years earlier in 1985.

If during the 1980s and early 1990s, Dennis' work was included in significant shows in the UK and US, then his subsequent development has been interestingly awkward, typical of painting's wider expansion since the 1980s through his unusual, divergent and contradictory subject matter. This exhibition, the painter's largest in the UK for thirty years, will hopefully prove to be significant for the wider discourse currently surrounding painting in the UK and abroad.

Jeffrey Dennis was born in Colchester in 1958 and graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art in 1980. Solo exhibitions include Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (1986), Orchard Gallery, Derry (with an essay by the late Stuart Morgan), and Salvatore Ala Gallery, New York (both 1993), Anderson O'Day Gallery, London (1994) and Art Space Gallery, London (2008). His work is held in collections worldwide, including the Arts Council Collection; the British Council Collection; Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris; The New School Art Collection, New York City; Saatchi Collection, London; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and Tate, London.

Jeffrey Dennis: Ringbinder is organised by the London-based curator Andrew Hunt. An extensive conversation between Dennis and Hunt around the artist's development since the late 1970s will be available in printed form within the exhibition, while a major new publication containing commissioned essays and a full catalogue of recent work will be published by NGCA in 2016.

Jeffrey Dennis 'Ringbinder' is generously supported by Arts Council England, Sunderland City Council and University of the Arts, London.

Ringbinder



Jeffrey Dennis

25 July – 17 October 2015

Curated by Andrew Hunt

Front cover: Her Chambers, Oil and charcoal on wood and polymerised board, 9 x 50 x 31cm, 2013.
Centre spread: Further Down the River, Oil and charcoal on linen, 82 x 102cm, 2013.
Back cover: Indoor Games, Oil and charcoal on polymerised board, 17 x 20 x 26cm, 2014.

Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art
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www.ngca.co.uk

Opening Times
Weekdays 9:30am - 5:00pm
except Wed until 7:00pm
Sat 10:00am - 4:00pm **Closed Sundays**

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You are warmly invited to the preview of
Ringbinder



A solo exhibition by Jeffrey Dennis

Curated by Andrew Hunt

6-8pm, 24 July 2015