

## BAERT GALLERY

### DENE LEIGH [b. 1989]

Dene Leigh's practice investigates neurological impairment and the fragility of human memory. Through painting, sculpture and drawing, the artist's work endeavours to make sense of his grandfather's difficulty with memory following a stroke. After experiencing life with the consequences of the stroke for several years, the artist's grandfather passed away. Soon after, the abrupt passing of the artist's mother generated an urge to grasp the memories and fleeting moments associated with those who are most important to him.

Faceless figures, illegible lettering and ambiguous objects, are recurrent images that explore three of the barriers to the artist's grandfather's everyday life that shook the artist the most. The barriers caused the inability to grasp language in its written and spoken form and rendered once familiar faces and objects unrecognisable. The artist's paintings try to collectively confront all of these ailments head-on, collaging aged imagery, revealing and concealing memories on the canvas.

The artist's drawings typically focus on his grandfather's troubles with language, making use of duplication of drawn geometric shapes onto timeworn handwritten letters to obscure the writing. The shapes act as an abstract imitation of the look of text itself, while the rows of blocks of lines epitomize the structure of prison bars, implying that one can be a hostage in one's own body following a condition such as stroke.

Within the sculptures, the final category of the artist's practice, the pieces combine numerous fragments of old objects. In the process of construction, the objects are repeatedly re-worked so that the facade of the original objects morph into one ambiguous structure and the memories associated with each item merge as one. Some of these unidentified sculptures appear within the composition of the artist's paintings, forming a dialogue between one another when exhibited together.

The artist finds and collects old photographs, letters and objects, which are used in the work. Images belonging to the artist's lost family members are collaged, preserved and presented to the viewer as reimagined compositions, sometimes unclear, much in the same way as memories are sorted and recalled. The personal images are often re-used, reappearing consistently in future paintings; bringing the memories alive again. The artist decontextualizes the found materials, painting certain segments of the imagery of the items onto canvas collaged with one another, while leaving former details behind. Additional items are disfigured to create drawings and sculptures.

The artist's body of work embodies the fragility of human memory and the desire to acknowledge and record those he has and has not met. The artist continually documents recollections of those dearest to him with themes of the barriers that his grandfather faced. In doing so, the work tries to glimpse through the eyes of the artist's grandfather, whilst solidifying the short-lived moments associated with the human memory and the ultimate decay of everything around us.

## DENE LEIGH

Born in 1989 in London, United Kingdom  
Lives and works in London, United Kingdom

### EDUCATION

2009-2012

BA Fine Art Painting, Wimbledon College of Art, London, UK

2008-2009

Foundation in Art & Design, Chelsea College of Art and Design, London, UK

### SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2020

*Works on Paper*, Baert Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2018

*Ephemeral*, Baert Gallery, Los Angeles, USA

*Royal Academy Summer Exhibition 2018*, Royal Academy of Arts, London UK

2017

*Royal Academy Summer Exhibition 2017*, Royal Academy of Arts, London UK

*Clyde & Co Art Awards Retrospective: 2011 - 2016*, gallery@oxo, London, UK

2016

*Agnosia*, Baert Gallery, Los Angeles, USA

2015

*Saatchi Screen*, Saatchi Gallery, Kings Road, Chelsea, London, UK

2014

*Shape Open: [in] visible*, Shape Arts Gallery, London, UK

*Young Masters*, selected by Godfrey Barker and Charles Saumarez Smith, Sphinx Fine Art, Kensington, London, UK

2013

*Shape Open: Disability Re-assessed*, selected by Yinka Shonibare, Nunnery Gallery, London, tour to Lewisham Arthouse, London, UK

*Art Is For Life*, Cultivate Gallery, Vyner Street, London, UK

2012

*Clyde & Co Art Awards*, Clyde and Co LLP, Houndsditch, London, UK

*Please Touch The Art*, Dye House Gallery, London, UK

*Degree Show*, Wimbledon College of Art, London, UK

### AWARDS

2014

Young Masters Art Prize, finalist

2012

The Clyde & Co Art Award, shortlisted