

DEAR PUNK

I LOVE YOU

FEBRUARY 2017

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Punk Rock is a music genre formed in the early 1970's by British and American bands including the Sex Pistols, Patti Smith and The Ramones. Their DIY approach to music production resulted in recordings that sounded fragmented, loud and disruptive with ironically violent undertones. These bands were made up of members who sought to react to the mainstream rock of the late sixties, reexamining the media's control of the performers identity; punk sought to eliminate the notion of the sixties 'rock star' and its corporate marketing device that linked rock music to its audience, consequentially rejecting its commercialization. As American artist and writer Dan Graham stated, Punk Rock set out to deliberately undermine liberal society's assumptions.¹ These musician's sought to appear ambiguously fascist, writing lyrics that expressed disgust for a capitalist consumer culture but were ultimately misinterpreted by the media as a literal advocacy towards violence.

Similar to the DIY approach to punk music and the musician's resistance to mainstream culture, Minimalist artists associated with the sixties and seventies including Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd and Robert Smithson reconsidered the nature of art and its institutions. Encompassing genres including painting,

¹ Graham, D. *Rock My Religion: The End Of Liberalism* 1993. P. 77

three-dimensional objects and earth works, each artist explored the relationship between the work and viewer; this investigation towards the possibility of dematerialisation and noncommodified art forms politically engaged the role of the artist. The conceptual approach towards ontological processes of making (constructed canvases, machine manufacturing and earth moving) questioned not only the nature of representation but also its relationship of history to the present. This constructed quality of space-time was repackaged for consumption where the reduced, non-objective aesthetic confronted a commercial market dependent on aesthetic dissemination for ease of interpretation.

The exhibition of paintings by artist Kyle Jenkins, titled *My Dirty Bloody Underground* is based on the American punk band 'The Brian Jones Town Massacre' and challenges interpretation through their non-representative abstraction. The works are constructions made up of black and white Xerox copies of band members performing, primarily Anton Newcombe. Cut and copied photographs are pasted into an assemblage of layers interrupted by geometric, hard-edged shards of painted colour resulting in fragmented images that visually arrest the viewer; urgent time is unleashed upon the audience and a 'fuck you' massacrific discord resonates from each picture plane. The works are not representative of a violent dialogue, but instead interrogate the history of Modernist Painting with an intoxicating riff of urgency. The question of the relevance of the past for the present is visually performed in such a way that intuitive processes of application dare not overshadow the historical and intellectual purposes, for fear of inevitable absorption. These paintings shout out. They are vulnerably fragile through their 'violence'. They bare the mark of the hand and soul, demanding attention through their originality and individuality. They reveal processes of

Jenkins' decision-making borne only from delicate focus and informed dedicated obsession.

Jenkins and the Brian Jones Town Massacre band members have little choice but to play and perform amongst channels of mainstream distribution. They are aware that in a digital world the collapsing of time, space and place is detrimental to identity, therefore they choose to challenge their audiences through conceptual intent. On first reception the works in this exhibition reflect ideas of a dirty underground but once engaged with, reveal to be coated in a tender and velvety intimacy. Similar to the band members Jenkins doesn't want to be assumed nor falsely interpreted by the masses; he's asking to be understood. He nurtures painting's persistent evolution as a personalised language; punk provides a stage for an honest investigation of the possibilities and hope for how painting can continue to evolve, manipulating it into a language that demands our visual attention so that he may engage, connect and be visually heard.