

Oliver Perkins

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Oliver Perkins
Red Letter
2024
Installation view, 3 East St



Oliver Perkins
Red Letter
2024
Installation view, 3 East St

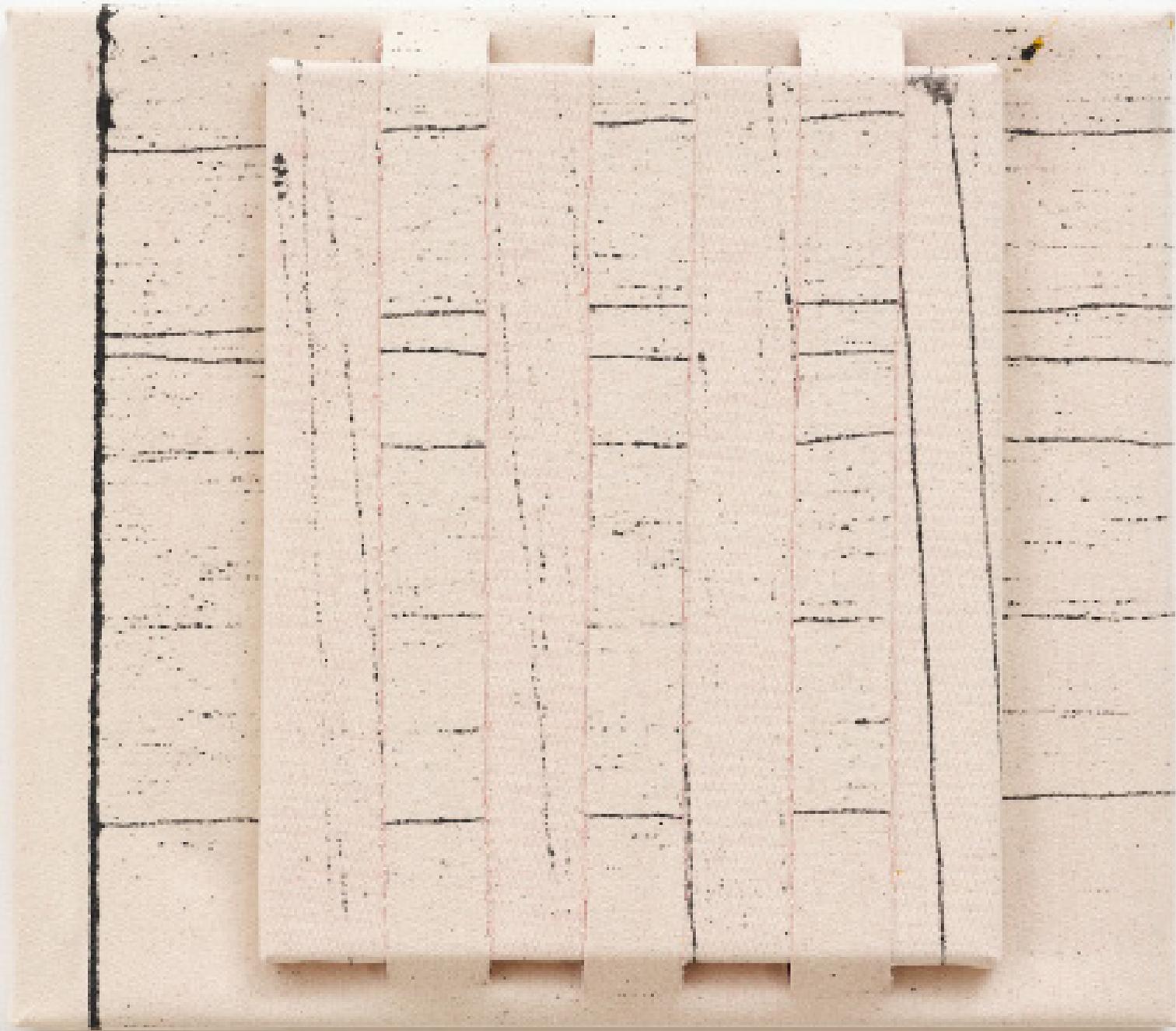


Oliver Perkins
Traverso
2022
ink, watercolour and size on canvas
400 x 500 x 45 mm



Oliver Perkins
The Reserve
2023

Installation view, Michael Lett



Oliver Perkins
Mandan
2022
ink, watercolour and size on canvas
350 x 400 x 45 mm



Oliver Perkins
The Reserve
2023
Installation view, Michael Lett



Oliver Perkins
Reserve
2022
ink, watercolour and size on canvas
500 x 700 x 45 mm



Oliver Perkins
Freeway
2022
ink, watercolour and size on canvas
350 x 500 x 50 mm



Oliver Perkins
The Reserve
2023
Installation view, Michael Lett



Oliver Perkins
FREE-RANGE
2022
Dunedin Public Art Gallery
Installation view



Oliver Perkins
A kind of arrow
2022
Dunedin Public Art Gallery
Installation view



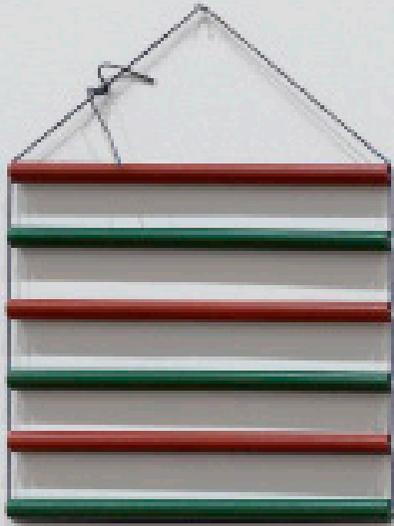
Oliver Perkins
A kind of arrow
2022
Dunedin Public Art Gallery
Installation view



Oliver Perkins
A kind of arrow
2022
Dunedin Public Art Gallery
Installation view



Oliver Perkins
A kind of arrow
2022
Dunedin Public Art Gallery
Installation view



Oliver Perkins
Walls to Live Beside, Rooms to Own
2022
Auckland Art Gallery, Toi o Tāmaki
Installation view



Oliver Perkins
Casting a crisis *Painting a cat* *Looking out a window*
2020
Michael Lett, Auckland
Installation view



Oliver Perkins
Last Letter
2019
size, acrylic, and ink on canvas
650 x 550mm



Oliver Perkins
Perrin
2019
size, acrylic, and ink on canvas
650 x 600mm



Oliver Perkins
A New Spider
2018
size, acrylic, and ink on canvas
450 x 450mm



Oliver Perkins
Trianche
2019
size, acrylic, and ink on canvas
650 x 600mm



Oliver Perkins
Untitled
2019
size, acrylic, ink, and rope on canvas
1600 x 1200mm



Oliver Perkins and Patrick Lundberg
On Emptiness
Installation view
Fold Gallery, London
May 2019

Oliver Perkins

Born 1979 in Christchurch, New Zealand
Lives and works in Christchurch, New Zealand

EDUCATION

2005
Masters of Arts, Chelsea School of Fine Art, London, England

2000–2002
Christchurch School of Art and Design

AWARDS & RESIDENCIES

2017
Parehuia Artists' Residency (McCahon House Residency)

2012
John Moores Painting Prize Exhibition, Walker Museum, Liverpool

2009
Jerwood Contemporary Painters, Jerwood Space, London (and touring)

2005
TANZ Overseas Study Recipient

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2024
Red Letter, 3 East St, Michael Lett, Auckland (solo)
The anticipation of Joy, Michael Lett, Auckland (group)

2023
The Reserve, Michael Lett, Auckland (solo)
Walls to Live Beside, Rooms to Own, Auckland Art Gallery, Toi o Tāmaki (group)

2022
A kind of arrow and FREE-RANGE, Dunedin Public Art Gallery (solo)

Swelter House, Jonathan Smart, Christchurch (solo)

2020
Casting a crisis Painting a cat Looking out a window, Michael Lett, Auckland (solo)
Touching Sight: Conor Clarke, Emma Fitts, Oliver Perkins, Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetū, Christchurch (group)

2019
Pilgrim's Oyster, Jonathan Smart Gallery, Christchurch (solo)
A distant relative, Hopkinson Mossman, Wellington (group)
On Emptiness (with Patrick Lundberg), Fold Gallery, London (group)

2018
Shadow Work (with Fiona Connor), Hopkinson Mossman, Auckland (group)
Bleeding Edge, Hopkinson Mossman, Wellington (solo)

2017
Japanese Laurel, Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, Auckland (solo)
Translations, Hopkinson Mossman, Auckland (solo)

2015
Necessary Distraction: A Painting Show, Toi o Tamaki, Auckland Art Gallery (group)
Armatures, Hopkinson Mossman, Auckland (solo)

2014
When I paint my masterpiece, Hopkinson Mossman, Auckland (group)
Dean Levin & Oliver Perkins, Rod Barton, London (group)

2013
Instruments, Hopkinson Cundy, Auckland (solo)
A swarming, talkative presence, Kingsgate Workshop, London (group)
Magic 8 Ball, Fold Gallery, London (group)
Big Deal No.5, Q-Car Park, London (group)

2012
John Moores Painting Prize, John Moores, Liverpool (group)
Painting is a Painting, is a Painting, is a Painting, curated by Rod Barton, Cul de Sac Gallery, London (group)
Big Refrigerator, Hopkinson Cundy, Auckland (group)

2011
Accordion, Cell Project Space, London (solo)

What If Its All True, What Then?, Mummery & Schnelle, London (group)

2010

The Grey Area, Cell Project Space, London (group)

2009

Dinner Party, Physics Room, Christchurch (solo)

MOTEL, Bartley and Company Gallery, Wellington (group)

Jerwood Painting Prize, Jerwood Space, London (group)

2008

Questions for the Gatekeeper, Fold Gallery, London (solo)

2008

Dinner Party, Physics Room, Christchurch (solo)

Cory Michael Project, Ada St, London (group)

2007

M.E.S.A, Kingsgate Gallery, London (solo)

Hygge, Standpoint Gallery, London (group)

2006

Disposable Fetish (project) (with Noon Day Demons), The Nunnery Gallery, London (group)

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

2019

Gubay, Rosa, 'On Emptiness', Contemporary Hum, October 2019

2015

Hurrell, John, 'Perkins' Innovative Stretchers', Eye Contact, June 2015

2014

Munn, Daniel, 'Perkins at Rod Barton', Matters, 2014

2013

Hurrell, John, 'Perkins at Hopkinson Cundy', Eye Contact, March 2013

2012

MacDonald, Vici, 'A "Fifth Plinth" at the Elelphant', Art Anorak, February 2012

2011

Lorent, Claude, 'Arts Libre', Supplement a la Libre, Brussels, 2011

'Abstract Critical Debate', Mummery + Schnelle Gallery, London, 2011

'Accordion Folds', John Dory Report 34, 2011

Hurrell, John, Summer Group Show, Eye Contact, December, 2011

2010

Grieves, Harold, T.I.E Degustation Menu, John Dory Report 12, 2010

Otago Daily Times
30 May 2022

Colours from a New Zealand palette

By **Rebecca Fox**

Entertainment (/entertainment) > Arts (entertainment/arts)



The Big Wall work in Oliver Perkins' exhibition "A Kind of Arrow" at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. PHOTO: LINDA ROBERTSON

Lyttelton artist **Oliver Perkins** has combined architecture, paint and canvas in two exhibitions opening at Dunedin Public Art Gallery today. He tells **Rebecca Fox** about "A Kind of Arrow" and "Free Range".

A couple of primary colours have travelled with artist Oliver Perkins in recent years.

But in his latest works at Dunedin Public Art Gallery red, blue, yellow and green have been joined by grey.

Why grey? It is the colour found in the storeroom of the gallery, bringing its history to play in the exhibition.

The colours have transformed the Big Wall in the foyer of the gallery and the walls of the Trust Bank gallery with large washes of colour Perkins calls "wall paintings".

For Perkins the four colours speak to the New Zealand vernacular and are reflected in commercial paint company colour swatches, which are often named "poetically" to reflect the country's scenery.

"There is a collective awareness of our relationships with colour in architecture ... this red oxide colour is reminiscent of the country's woolsheds, the grey a concrete colour."

Just how distinctive New Zealand's colours are, stood out to Perkins when he returned to New Zealand from a few years living in Spain.

"The range and way colour is presented to us and sold to us is different there."

It was in Spain his interest in architecture developed as he absorbed the different style of building in a new country.



Oliver Perkins

"It's the social and physical conditions around architecture and space for people, the historical significance and previous tenants, the history of buildings and social constructs around buildings."

In "A Kind of Arrow" Perkins has looked at the history of the DPAG, its previous use as a department store and the way its architecture has developed over the years.

In particular, the addition of the angled window that looks out of the gallery on to the Big Wall where his other work features.

"Obviously, this window is significant in the space. It is not often in a gallery space that you get to look out. In thinking about how the wall paintings function as frame to view another work, sets the viewer up with this sort of experience in mind."



A kind of arrow 2022, watercolour, ink and size on canvas, by Oliver Perkins. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND MICHAEL LETT.

He has also used full-height aluminium poles to frame some of the wall paintings, reflecting architectural elements of the building such as the balustrades.

"The wall paintings side up to everyday experiences, it's completely democratic, everyone can walk past a field of red or blue. Those two visual experiences are held in the show and suspended by the building itself."

In opposition to and in conversation with the wall paintings are works on canvas where Perkins has used ink in a process similar to staining to saturate the surface with colour rather than paint the colour on top of the surface.

To do this Perkins, who spent 10 years in London after completing his master of arts from Chelsea College of Art, uses rabbit skin glue, normally used by furniture makers, to create the tautness needed to hold the colour.

It was a discovery he made back in 2006 and has built on ever since as it also allows him to add layers and cut-outs to his paintings, inserting pictures within pictures.

"I'm more consumed with the way picture meets object now."

He has found he is now more open to influences, such as the view from his home and studio in Lyttelton of the ships and ocean or from children's cartoons playing at home.

"This way of painting or staining, you can hide quite a few images of things behind different layers of painting."

For this exhibition he has done more painting than he has done for many years.

"From the get go the painting became a lot looser, far more freer."

But he has also found it has been a much wider process starting without knowing what the end point is going to be.

"There are very few paintings where I just have an idea and say I want to see that."

As the works for the exhibition had taken two years, once he had completed works he packed them up and stored them under the house. So he has found the works reflect chapters in his painting practice over the time.

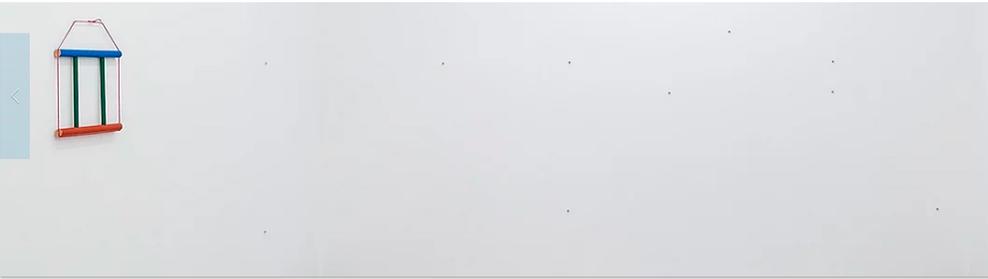
"It's been a very gestational exhibition. As I've pulled them all out, I've found quite disparate paintings but they connect."

Installing the exhibition has been an experience for Perkins who has not used any computer programmes to visualise the works in the space.

"It's offering some surprises but mostly good ones."

The exhibition

"A Kind of Arrow" and "Free Range", Oliver Perkins, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, until October 16.



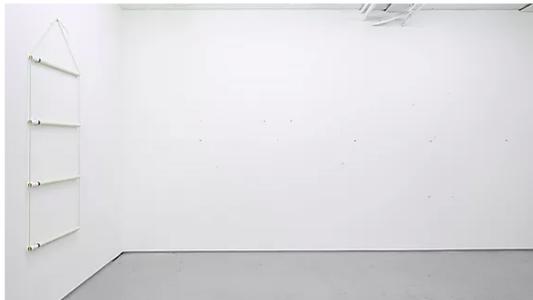
On Emptiness

by Rosa Gubay | published 02.10.19

A response to Oliver Perkins and Patrick Lundberg's exhibition at FOLD Gallery, London this year.

Utilising everyday materials, such as dowels, rope and pinheads, and primarily concerned with an abstraction of colour and form, artists Patrick Lundberg and Oliver Perkins share a number of affinities that lend a formal unity to their recent joint exhibition at FOLD, a commercial gallery and project space in London which also presented an exhibition of Judy Millar's work in 2018. FOLD's programme, which focuses on abstraction and materiality within painting and sculpture, is a natural fit for these two painters working from Aotearoa New Zealand. However, while these formal aspects bring a sense of unity to the exhibition, this cohesion is sustained by the two artists' approaches to the concept of emptiness. *On Emptiness* seeks to develop a particular conversation between two distinct categories of the artists' work – Lundberg's 'sets' and Perkins' 'string and dowels' – both of which draw their strength from their internal composition of negative space.

FOLD's physical gallery space, in a basement off the backstreets of Fitzrovia, lends itself to this collection of the artists' work, which seeks to engage so directly with its spatial surrounds. There is a rhythm to the show in the tangle of slow discoveries and thrusts of shapes, edges and spacing. Through this, the work finds grip on painterly and architectural space. Entering the room, you encounter the first of Lundberg's set-pieces *No Title* (2019) [fig. 1] which sprawls across the first wall. This is a network of 16 painted wooden pins, each ball, balloon, or flat-edged multi-sided shape is a painting in miniature [fig. 2]. The paint on the pin-heads shifts between precise flecks of colour and washed planes, and their scale requires a closeness which necessitates that the viewer accedes to the intimacy they invite. Meeting at the adjoining wall is the first of Perkins' 'string and dowel works' – *Untitled* (2019) [fig. 3]. It has a material immediacy; canvas is wrapped around four horizontal lengths of doweling, which are held in alignment by a single piece of rope. Hanging from a nail, the rope skirts the ends of the dowels, runs along the base of the bottom rung and up the other side, tied blithely at its apex. The raw look of the unprimed canvas, wooden doweling and rope is interrupted by strips of painted black and white which jolt up the left of the canvas covers. The tiers of doweling and the slim string border act to frame the wall echoing the structure of architectural spaces, pitched roofs and narrow, multi-storied buildings like that in which the gallery is housed.



As outlined in the exhibition's text, both artists have taken their cue from Renaud Barbaras' critique of the idea of nothingness as the absence of being in the phenomenological writings of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. Invoking a phenomenological study, at first, appears out of sorts (phenomenology having largely fallen out of favour given the dematerialisation of contemporary practices in the 1970s). However, Barbaras' critique of the Husserlian tradition of nothingness as an absolute void underpins a different way of conceiving the object as something more than simply the negation of nothing. Indeed, for Barbaras, this "crude distinction between positive being and negative nothingness" is better reframed as phenomenological perception whose gradations are open to exploration. ¹ This consideration is taken up by both Perkins' and Lundberg's incorporation of negative space within their particular practices. By internalising this negative space, Lundberg and Perkins demonstrate how one can compose *with* emptiness, an emptiness that is defined as elemental. For example, the space held within Perkins' string and dowel frames enable these works to take up a propositional stance. The absence between the painted elements plays with and circumvents representational modes, leaving the work in a suggestive and unresolved state. In a more literal sense, the artist is also framing the world, the painted white walls in these hollows reminding us of paintings' expanded field in its relationship with our everyday.

As stated in the exhibition text, both Lundberg and Perkins think of painting as a "receptacle through which the World appears to us negatively". This is evident in Lundberg's set pieces, in which a number of different pins, variously painted in specks and washes, are spread across a wall. With this loose dispersal of pins, Lundberg's practice relies on the negative space of the wall as the very support for the work, indeed it is integral to the manner of its slow unfolding. Punctured and punctuated, these sparse compositions command the breadth of this space allowing the small painted elements to tug and propel you, exploring their relational potential. The empty wall acts as a spacer, its physical boundaries guiding your relation to the set's elements. It is the ground on which the work finds its structure. Furthermore, the sensitivity of the artist's arrangement of the set on the wall – skirting corners and pipes – makes you aware of the negative space as a positive force with a presence of its own. Unsurprisingly, Allan Smith describes these set pieces as having an "extreme gravitational density" and a pulling power "out of all proportion to their actual size". ²



The structure of Lundberg's pin works can be explored in relation to philosopher Alain Badiou's use of set theory. Each of Lundberg's singular pins belongs to an immutable group, sometimes defined from the outset and sometimes growing as one piece influences the next. For Badiou, the elements of the sets are only significant in their relation to the other elements in the set. In much the same way, it seems that it is the multiplicity, divergence or consistency between pins which is of interest for Lundberg. However, while Badiou discounts a perceptual account of the sets within his framework, this is structural to Lundberg's practice. Take the set at the back of the space, *No Title* (2017) [fig. 4]. Comprising a number of spherical pins of transparent resin, the matte surface of each element is painted with small trails of brightly-coloured paint. Seemingly delicate but materially rich, the minutiae of difference within this work is unable to be grasped from a single glance or at a distance. Often only discovered upon close inspection, the deviation between pins dictates a movement on the part of the viewer, negotiating the expansion and contraction of pins on the empty field. In this way, an intrinsic focus also seems to be placed on time in its relation to space and the duration of the viewer's perceptual encounter. Lundberg's work inhabits a slow time that exploits scale and architectural space.

In this same work, three pins are vertically set up the wall, with faint pencil lines still visible from their mapping. These lines are suggestive of a practice that exists beyond the work's final form. Exposing the planning process introduces a consideration of time in its latent potential. Splayed across the white wall, the graphite lines remind us of the many possibilities inherent in this open structure and the infinite variables of form this compositional multiplicity might take on. This can also be seen in other presentations of Lundberg's sets. For example, in *No title: 32 parts 2014 (40 parts revised, 2017)* at Goya Curtain, Tokyo (2017) the artist added eight pieces of wire to a work from 2014, presenting the wooden spheres, ball bearings, hooks and wire on the tatami matting of the gallery floor. In the short text accompanying this work he states, "if no idea is posited as transcendent or outside of the work then every manifestation is immanent to it. Thus the work's 'outside' is its possible future becomings." This is a good example of the perceived restlessness of Lundberg's sets, always seeming to speak of possibility rather than fixity, mimicked in the anxious movement of the viewer. In the repetition of similar or near identical elements, there is always an implication that the elements in question could be multiplied indefinitely. The work is never truly wholly manifest, nor graspable in an instant.



Almost in the obverse to the expanse of Lundberg's set pieces, Perkins' paintings are self-contained in the most literal sense. In his implant works, for example, where one painting plays host to another, the ghostly silhouette of the second canvas is pressed taut against the exterior. The same sense of containment can be seen in the delineation of the empty space held within or kept outside the rope frames of the string and dowels on display in *On Emptiness*. Comprising as their base element a composition of wooden doweling, held in vertical or horizontal alignment by staples and rope, this form is treated with an array of pared down formalist painterly language; the dowels sometimes painted thickly in bright colours like children's toys [fig. 5] or wrapped in canvas with two inky colour-fields and a Barnett-Newman-like zip through the centre [fig. 6]. Displayed in this way, the string and dowels begin to form their own kind of set as points in a system. The works have their own multiplicity in the combination and recombination of defined elements. Seen together, they show their deviation; where a work hangs from one nail instead of two or where the same colour is applied thickly instead of finely and these departures offset a monotonous reading. In its abstraction, the frame and the negative space contained within becomes a seemingly endless and highly-suggestive piece of source material. For instance, each variation, each tiered structure could in turn be a house, an arch, or an altarpiece. These references of an exterior world are deliberately internalised and enable the string and dowels to exist in a volatile state bridging materiality and imaginary spaces.

Unlike Lundberg's sets, which, by foregrounding a notion of time, are as much about potential future becomings as their present physical form, Perkins' work focuses on a porosity in which emptiness takes on the equivalence of an object. For example, in the string and dowel works, this porous quality functions as an intermediary device, so that each of the painting's rods oscillates between presence and absence, content and non-content. Internalising this emptiness allows these paintings to absorb foreign qualities both referential and material. Such porosity can also be seen in Perkins' material register where alongside ink, acrylic, canvas and rabbit-skin glue, he employs more commonplace materials, such as the wooden doweling and rope, enamel house paint and staples. As a counterpoint to the use of rigid geometry, this material exploration reminds us of painting's relationship to the everyday and distinguishes Perkins' practice from a kind of sober modernism.



Lundberg and Perkins turn to painting as an instrument by which to examine the world. In doing so, the artists open up a broader examination of the boundaries between object and non-object oriented practices. Launching from Barbaras' conception of 'nothingness as a mirage', both artists look to compose with emptiness, centralising the negative space of the gallery walls in their paintings. The works are enthralling, the slow discoveries to be made beg closer examination – where coloured light is reflected on a wall from one of Perkins' dowels, or the precise Kandinsky-like flecks on Lundberg's pins are interrupted by a broad stroke of shocking pink. Both categories of work utilise and redeploy fixed elements to different effect and these shifts direct your perceptual encounter. An innate multiplicity exists in the work, and the exhibition feels as much about painting's potential as its fixed state. Given this flux, Badiou's use of set theory could also be seen to have bearing on the show as a whole. Sets are as much determined by what is included as what is excluded. No two sets can be the same and, as such, are defined against the constitutive elements of another. With multiple sets seen in the space, *On Emptiness* extends this ontological study among and between the works on show.

¹ Renaud Barbaras, *Desire and Distance*, translated by Paul B. Milan (Stanford University Press, 2006), 58.

² Allan Smith, 'Little by Little, Soon a Rich Cloth: Painting Everywhere and Everywhere,' in *Necessary Distraction: A Painting Show* (Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2016), 34.