

Anna K.E.

In Order of Appearance

05.11.–17.12.2022

Opening: 04.11.2022, 6–9pm

Whispering is an unvoiced mode of phonation in which the vocal cords are abducted so that they do not vibrate; air passes between the arytenoid cartilages to create audible turbulence during speech.

In Anna K.E.'s new exhibition 'In Order of Appearance', 33 works are hung in a grid. Each frame contains an oversized, varnished picture mount with a small drawing in the centre. K.E. began the series in 2018 during a road trip from Los Angeles to New York, and kept working on it during her subsequent travels. On pages torn from a sketchbook, she has drawn portraits of people she met along the way. But these portraits are not realistic depictions: the faces have been reduced to abstract forms, with some looking geometric and constructed, others spontaneous and ornamental. K.E. herself describes them as avatars, as they bear no similarity to their subjects but are instead associative renderings from her memory.

Because we use computers and smartphones every day, we've become used to seeing images arranged in grids on sites like Instagram and Pinterest. Transposed into an exhibition space, this way of presenting images stands in tension with the small, intimate oil pastel portraits. Both these portraits and the manually varnished picture mounts they sit in have been crafted by hand.

This play of intimacy and subjectivity continues in the sound installation False Sequence. A shower cubicle is positioned in the centre of the room rather than in the corner, investing the fragile glass structure with a paradoxical quality that renders it unfamiliar. Mounted in the glass are two speakers, from which the sound of quiet whispering emanates. It is K.E.'s voice reading texts she has written herself, which like the portraits are abstract reflections on and recollections of her travels and previous exhibitions. The special acoustics forces exhibition visitors to come right up close to the speakers, simulating the intimacy of two human bodies being pressed together. The quiet whispering is also reminiscent of the ASMR videos that are now so popular on sites like YouTube. ASMR stands for autonomous sensory meridian response, which is a tingling sensation on the skin, prompted by an acoustic or tactile stimulus, that many people find pleasant and soothing.

The intimate way in which visitors are invited to engage with the installation mirrors the experience of being in a shower, which is normally built into the corner of the bathroom as a private, self-contained space where people can relax and cleanse their bodies. But in this case, the formal qualities of the freestanding glass structure serve to expose the visitors in their fragility, so that they

themselves become part of the exhibition. This creates a doubly voyeuristic situation, in which we are apparently able to hear the artist's thoughts as we listen to her quiet whispering, while at the same time other visitors are able to watch us doing so.

This exhibition represents a new departure in Anna K.E.'s artistic output. Both installations were produced in transitional situations, and have their origins in fleeting moments that she has documented figuratively rather than literally