

press release

JOHN KIRBY HOME

Private View Tuesday 23 June 6-8pm



24 June – 18 July 2009

Opening times: Mon-Fri 10-6, Sat 10-2

Flowers

21 Cork St
London
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John Kirby's 'Home' presents a cast of characters who inhabit a world in which the familiar is made strange.

Following from his 2007 exhibition 'Being Alive', a number of Kirby's new works progress his interrogation of the notion of Being. There is the self-portrait 'Being 60', in which a background charged with a foreboding blankness threatens to drive the artist from view. Continuing along this path, 'Being in Love', the study of a face sealed by the shutting of eyes – an impenetrable visage hinting at the hidden raptures of an interior world – alludes to the seductive theatre of repression so often implied by the artist's anonymous subjects and emptied-out spaces. These paintings – works that cling to the pivot between Being and Nothingness – form part of an ontological riddle completed, but by no means solved, by 'Being too Clever', a painting that pictures the precarious balancing act of a juggler, a motif that the artist returns to with an obsessive fixation befitting the act itself.

Kirby also paints scenes pregnant with domestic disquiet, in which characters encounter one another in an series of *pas de deux* that formally act out their (dis)connection. In *Civil Ceremony*, two suited figures inhabit a space of minimal visual stanchions and maximum symbolic unease. The apparent joy of their recent union, suggested by the work's title, is undermined by the disjunction created by an abundance of oblique angles: gazes are diverted, doors left ajar, shadows splinter the picture plane, carnations puncture grey tweed lapels like the hot bloom of bruised skin. 'In the Morning' offers us further access to the intimate pockets of domestic existence, as another male couple are captured in shared slumber. Rather than voyeurs intruding in a private interplay, we witness further evidence of the absence of fulfilment: the characters turn away from each other, manifesting the denial of desire that results from their absorption into familial routine. We imagine that it is not without design that an image of a cross – a window frame visible from behind a closed blind - looms large in this scene. For Kirby, the domestic is steeped in the presence of an unforgiving religious ubiquity just as it is invested with the perpetual sense of existential crisis.

Born in Liverpool, England in 1949, John Kirby attended St. Martin's School of Art and the Royal College of Art, London. He has exhibited internationally, and his work is included in public collections including the Tate and the V&A.

For further information or images, please contact Ellie Harrison-Read at Flowers East on 020 7920 7777 or email ellie@flowerseast.com

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