

TG

SLEIGHT OBJECTS

Some time ago I met a friend in the street outside our studios. I said 'You look miserable are you OK?' She replied 'I'm fine I just haven't got any ideas at the moment'. My problem is I have too many, different artists different ways.

I had to move studio recently, the building was to be sold for housing. It was a big studio that I'd had for a decade, and was filled with accumulated materials, and collected items that all had some relation to my process of production. Things that reminded me of ideas on hold.

The studio I moved to was smaller so inevitably a lot was left behind in the move. Not just the physical stuff, but the memories and prompts they were imbued with. Continuity in this situation is difficult but also provides a freedom. I looked to things that were at hand or could be bought locally. I had nearby a few cheap outlets for household goods and a 99p shop.

To amuse myself I started to make things that had little relation to recent work, and it turned out, little relation to each other. I wondered in this period of 'freedom' whether good ideas and bad ideas were equal depending on where you stood in relation to them.

What happens if I do this? Can I do this? Really?

Results accumulated, things I liked, but didn't know what they were, or how they related. Whether they were art.

In 2006 I made a work called 'Six Chinese Paintings'. A collection of small paintings made in the 1960's in a workshop in China for the export market. The image was the same in each work that I collected from *brocante* sales in Northern France over a few summers. The paintings made by different artisans depicted a sea view of Brittany featuring a small cottage. The disengaged artisans created accidental moods with colour and brushstrokes, that asked questions about depiction. A gable end was the same tone as the sky behind and so 'disappeared'.

I mused on the metaphysical.

What initially was a 'collection' of similar objects, had transformed into a single artwork.

It was clear that the things I was now making were of small scale, insubstantial, *slight*. That's OK.

Slight as *modest, insubstantial, superficial*

Slight as *insult, disrespect*.

Sleight as *artifice, cunning, deception, stratagem*.

A potential framework to consider these disparate objects had formed.

EB April 2024