

Robert McNally

17 Jun — 29 Jul 2017 at the Workplace Gateshead
in Gateshead, United Kingdom



Robert McNally. Courtesy of Workplace Gateshead
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Workplace Gateshead is delighted to present *Auf Wiedersehen*, a solo exhibition of new and existing work by Robert McNally. His first exhibition in his hometown and first UK solo exhibition outside of London.

McNally creates complex drawings from memory, mediating thought and emotions into a world far from the language of words. His layered drawings simultaneously echo the cram a universe-into-an-atom type of density found in the paintings by Hieronymus Bosch and the absurd, chaotic and confrontational narratives in the videos and installations of Paul McCarthy. It is no surprise that McNally's drawings have already been collected

by artists similarly engaged in the fundamentals of life and death such as Jake and Dinos Chapman and Damien Hirst. Morphing into layers of unraveling story threads emptying out into fluent, linear, pictorial fictions, constructed meaning becoming truth is at the heart of his work. From mass-media and news channels to the zone where the Dark Arts meet pseudo-science the subjects of McNally's work consist in denial, ignorance, ridiculousness, satire, parable, allegory, hypocrisy, anachronism, relationship with history, ambivalence, and the fine line between faith and understanding, manipulation and gullibility. McNally's incredible technique employs similar ruses, tricking the eye, and confounding the viewer. The works also serve to reinforce the artist's belief in art, as he says: Art has similarities to the mechanics of mysticism, the currency and value being largely subjective, the effect questionable and the interpretation often so utterly broad as to render it almost meaningless. But I am able to live by art's honesty that it is man made and that I don't need a medium to explain it to me. For his exhibition at Workplace Gateshead McNally brings together works that examine the extremities of our culture. From the perspective of 'ex-pat' Geordie artist currently living and working in cosmopolitan Berlin, McNally particularly and directly confronts the absurdity of British Culture. Black eye Fridays 2016 depicts the carnage of the most popular night in the year for office and factories Christmas parties, which consequently makes it one of the busiest nights in the year for ambulances and the police in the UK. A wild scene of bulging muscles, flailing clenched fists, spilt drinks, and flying high-heeled shoes is played out to a backdrop of revelers and vacant drunken faces. Another work that shows an apparently medieval scene of drink and debauchery is entitled Inselaffen (alternative ending to the Bayeux tapestry No.1) 2017. The word Inselaffen translates as 'Island monkeys' or 'island oafs' and refers to the German (and other European countries) stereotypical image of the English as heavy drinking, violent, criminalistic and yobbish, characteristics of the English

regularly witnessed by Europeans when visiting the UK, while on holiday elsewhere or at football matches. German people offer this behavior as evidence to a tongue in cheek theory that evolution stalled on the island of Great Britain. However on closer inspection this work takes a far more serious and melancholy position as we see the body of murdered Labour Party politician Jo Cox lying seemingly unnoticed as the masses complain about people 'coming over here, stealing our jobs'.

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Opening hours

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From 11am to 5pm