

DEREK ELLER GALLERY

DAVID KENNEDY CUTLER

Muscle Memory

July 11 - August 16, 2019

Opening Reception: Thursday, July 11, 2019, 6-8pm



Climbing Out (Right), 2019, inkjet transfer and acrylic on canvas, Permalac, 29 x 16 x 2.5 inches.

Muscle memory describes the ability to clone a gesture without conscious thought. Unconscious actions are learned through repetition: by performing the same task habitually, we lose awareness of the task itself. By storing a cache of automated movements in our body, we untether from the recollections lodged in our mind.

In a culture saturated in images, in a climate where we are expected to proliferate our physical selves endlessly (through our labor and images of the self), our consciousness experiences a scattering, or stuttering. By projecting the self in perpetuity, we become disassociated from our sense of ourselves.

When I make my work, I choose images of things closest to me: my clothes, my wife's clothes, her body, my body, our food, the plants in our apartment, my tools. These are intimate and introverted things that illuminate the most basic functions of living: moving, dressing, eating, sheltering, touching, interacting, offering, sharing and working. They are objects that allude to their proximity to the body (often framed like rectangular torsos in the most recent works) and the habitual repetitions we perform. Our possessions and our choices represent us, but they do not stay still. In their multiplicity, they form a portrait of a life, lived.

The works in the exhibition are made using inkjet transfer and acrylic paint on clothing or stretched, layered canvas. They incorporate gestures from photography, printmaking, sewing, painting and performance. The transfer technique allows me to literally "paint with images" as if a stroke or spill of paint magnetically attracted photographic imagery to the substrate.

While cooking dinner with my wife recently, she noted that all the works in the show depicted a garment: my plaid shirts, her dress, a yellow rain coat, a "rain pattern" camouflage jacket, a work apron, a shredded skeleton t-shirt I've been wearing for 20 years. I cannot hide from her influence. Her immersion in clothing as assistant curator at the Costume Institute has made me rethink received hierarchies about art and art history. It has redefined my thinking about the expressions of the self.

I'd been working intuitively all year, and over dinner with her, I had to articulate what I saw in the work: a heavy weight of mortality and gravity, gestures of offering, sharing, sheltering, preserving. Pictures of material accumulation and substance pouring down; works wet, humid and saturated; skins practically drowning in bounty and overgrowth. The vine tattooed on my wife's leg climbs up toward the floral embroidery of her dress; a rain coat lapped by leaves of kale or exploded by late summer sunflowers; bulbous pears popping off the armature of a rib cage; potatoes coughing out of a skeleton's chest; hands catching rain; fingers dangling a soaked pair of Vans.

- David Kennedy Cutler

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Muscle Memory will be Kennedy Cutler's fourth solo exhibition at Derek Eller Gallery. In the winter of 2018, he completed a live-streamed two-months solo show and residency at Halsey McKay Gallery in East Hampton, NY. Previously, he had solo exhibition at the Center for Contemporary Arts, Estonia in partnership with Art in General (2016). He has recently been included in exhibitions at Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York; Cooley Gallery at Reed University, Portland, OR; The Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, Clinton, NY; Locust Projects, Miami, FL; Lyles and King, New York, NY; and the Philadelphia Photo Arts Center, Philadelphia, PA.

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 300 Broome Street between Eldridge Street and Forsyth Street. Summer hours are Monday-Friday from 11am to 6pm. For further information, please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit www.derekeller.com.