



365 Happy Days

at gallery **37**

www.jamespgilmour.com

James Gilmour's art counts among its attributes an awareness of time. A number of his works are governed by the structure of hours and days, the latticework on which time grows; they are endowed with a particular feeling for the quality of time that is both understated and pervasive, its ability to conceal itself and to reappear.

For his installation *12 Sunny Hours* Gilmour positioned a series of sundials in Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens. The faces of the sundials acknowledged the different hours with a sequence of watercolours, their imagery now retained in woodblock prints. They include '10.00am *This day is different; the next may be the same*' which shows two scenes of a house that are possibly identical, seeming to reflect the repetitions and variations of time. Sunless hours are measured in his series *a(sleep)*, inspired by the time lost in sleep. The prints form a disturbing pillow-book with their black and white lines expressing the vertiginous sensation of falling asleep, or the torment of the insomniac enduring the passing of nocturnal hours without release. Time lost in the ordeal of unrequited devotion is the subject of *Stalker*. The rhythm of the stalker's day is determined by surveillance of his beloved, whose presence perpetually promises to fulfil the happiness that flickers in shared moments - '*That sound in your voice as you pick up the phone*'.

Gilmour recognised the arrival of the new millennium with an installation titled *2000 Painted Pages*. As if fanning through the years of the last two millennia, the work displayed 2000 pages with each sheet identified by a distinct numeral and pale watercolour. The pages were set against a wall so they moved and reacted with changes in humidity and the motion of passing bodies, so invoking the continuous brushing of each past year against the present.

The idea for Gilmour's current project fell some years ago from a bubble-gum dispenser in the shape of a badge inscribed '365 Happy Days'. He has responded to its glib prophecy with the decision to produce a sketch each day for 365 days. The time taken to complete the work becomes part of its subject; it will be finished after 365 days have passed, and the experience of his past 24 hours suggests the theme of each drawing. The work unfolds as a calendar of the immediate past, destined to be quickly of another time. The sketches are informed by the tonalities of daily moods, events, afterthoughts and distractions that consume time and constitute an individual's life. So far there has been the day of falling over in the street, passing someone he knows without speaking, experiencing buyer's remorse, receiving a dismissive email, suffering a paper cut and waking on a Monday to "a world without Sunday".

The work tests the promise of the novelty badge in an exacting way that appears both to resent and to recapture childhood's uncertain, idealistic

vision of the future. It seems apt that these daily sketches surface in the floating world of the internet, filled as it is with a desire for the currency of the present. As the days of the year pass, Gilmour's drawings multiply and are woven together, creating the irregular pattern of time's camouflage that disguises its progress in seemingly small, unrelated incidents.

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