

JONATHAN OWEN

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PRESS RELEASE:



- Jonathan Owen, Untitled , 2021, 19th century marble bust with further carving, 70 x 48 x 29 cm

Jonathan Owen is best known for his interventions into ‘found’ antique sculptures, a process of re-carving and reinventing defunct marble statuary in an attempt - as he puts it - “to subvert and puncture this familiar rhetoric, and so to reactivate the object through transformation rather than destruction, to make a new proposition.”

This approach offers a way of working that seems especially relevant at the present moment (as the conversation around public monuments is so vigorously reconsidered and rephrased) questioning ideas of permanence and power, attributes so often associated with the original sculptures that are his favoured raw material.

The exhibition includes dramatically re-worked busts of once powerful men, but at its centre there is a major new sculpture based on a life-size, allegorical figure of Navigation, a figure that formerly stood proud as a symbol of empire and exploration - sextant and rudder at the ready - reduced to a pile of interlinking chains snaking across its plinth on the gallery floor.



Jonathan Owen, Eraser Drawing (Michael Caine), 2020, Partially erased book page, 35.8 x 31.1 cm (framed)

Alongside this group of new sculptures Owen will also present new 'eraser drawings' - also made by a reductive process, a kind of two-dimensional carving of old book pages - working backwards through layers of ink from blacks through greys to white, gradually removing tone from the surface of the page to delete the foreground subject, and subtly re-form the background.

The first of these, made some years ago, concentrated on removing statues from their plinths, but his most recent series has focussed on images from the history of cinema, erasing the foreground figures of Hollywood stars, and reshaping them into the inanimate details of the scenes they once inhabited.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Owen was born in Liverpool in 1973 and graduated from Edinburgh College of Art MFA in 2000. His exhibition at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art was one of the highlights of 2014's nationwide GENERATION project, profiling the very best in contemporary art in Scotland over the past 25 years. This presentation accompanied and contextualised Owen's public artwork for a prominent landmark within the city, commissioned by Edinburgh Art Festival in 2016. His most recent exhibitions include *NGV Triennial*, Victoria, Australia (2017) and *Mark-making: Perspectives on Drawing*, Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow (2019).

Jonathan Owen's works are held in public and private collections across the world. Public collections include National Gallery Victoria, Australia; Henry Moore Foundation, UK; University of Edinburgh Art Collection, UK; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, UK; Aberdeen Art Gallery, UK and Rhode Island School of Design, USA.

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