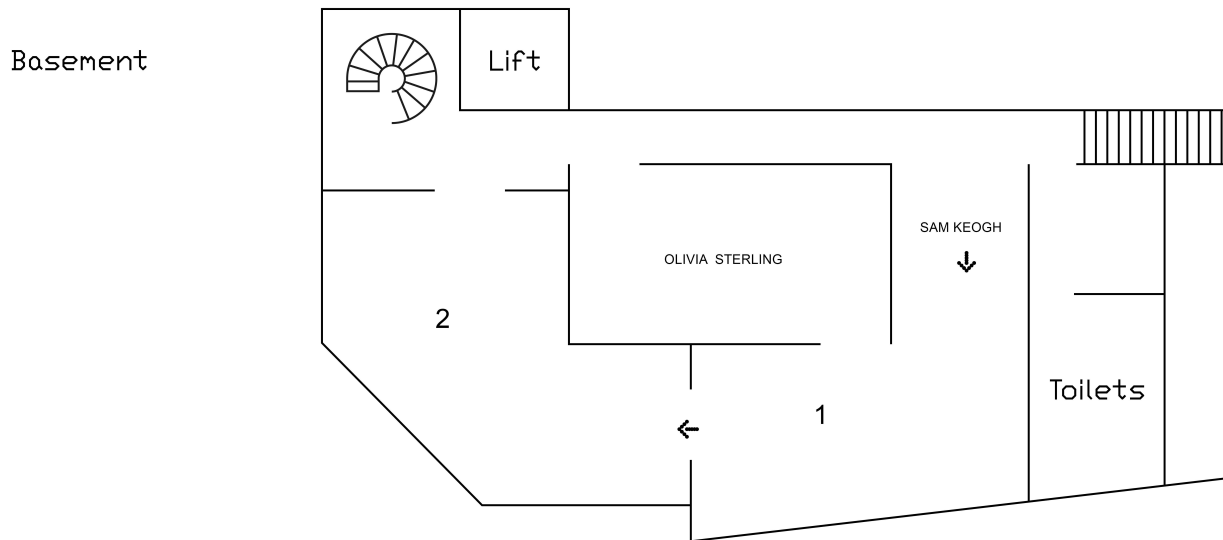


FLOORPLAN



EVENTS

22 Sep, 7–7.30pm PERFORMANCE
25 Sep, 5.30–6pm *SAM KEOGH*
29 Sep, 7–7.30pm

Sculptures become props and collage becomes backdrop as Keogh unfolds a story about eating a pig in Stansted airport.

The performance will take place outdoors, outside the gallery's main entrance.

29 Oct, 1–2pm TOUR:
WITH PROFESSOR JOSH COHEN

Josh Cohen will bring his perspective to bear on Keogh's work, speaking from his research and practice in cultural theory, literature, and psychoanalysis.

11 Nov, 7–9pm ONLINE:
*I DIDN'T GO TO WORK TODAY...I
DON'T THINK I'LL GO TOMORROW*

A panel discussion with Amelia Groom, Avery Gordon, Esther Leslie and Gavin Mueller that takes as its focus histories of anti-work, sabotage, fantasies of abundance, and attempts to smash, destroy or mutate linear time.

To book tickets and find out more about our events programme visit www.goldsmithscca.art/events

EXHIBITION GUIDE

SAM KEOGH

Sated Soldier, Sated Peasant, Sated Scribe

17 Sep – 12 Dec 2021

Running across the basement galleries of the CCA, artist Sam Keogh (b.1985, Wicklow, Ireland) presents a series of performances, and an installation of ceramic sculptures and collaged paintings on paper, that draw on pre-modern motifs and myths of abundance.

The mediaeval myth of Cockaigne – a land of plenty in which food is abundant (it rains cheese), work abolished, and sexuality liberated – features in both verse and visual traditions; most powerfully for Keogh in Bruegel the Elder's painting *The Land of Cockaigne* (1567) which shows three figures sprawled in a circular motif under a table bearing food and drink in a rural idyll (a wandering pig in the background bears a knife on its back to aid ease of carving).

Keogh mines this image for its disruptive power at a time of strict feudal power relations and peasant revolt. The fantasy of rest, pleasure and perpetual feasts depicted here might be read as an important contribution to a proto-communist imaginary. But Cockaigne is also a place where everything is cooked, and so closer to being dead than alive. The main figures are bloated, heavy and immobilised by their gluttony in this world of beige and brown where nothing seems to be growing, but instead slouches toward decomposition as if time has slowed or stopped. Keogh sees these contradictory elements of the myth as being part of its persistence as fantasy. Its qualities of nonsense and impossibility don't amount to a workable image of a potential future world, but instead appeal to the libidinal or bodily desires of the audience – things which don't need to be understood to function.

The first encounter is with a sculpture of a prone man, the peasant figure from the painting itself, and the reverse of a large-scale collaged drawing. This, like all the collages in the show, is pieced together from cut out paintings and drawings, and held to a bright red background by tape alone. This emphasises a contingency of composition, a potential to recompose the images at any moment, and a latent gravitation force held in precarious check. Keogh made these works as 'cartoons'; 1:1 scale blueprints used by tapestry weavers to reproduce a design in silk.

The 'Lady and the Unicorn' tapestries made in the 15th century Flanders are an important point of departure for the collages. The original meaning of the tapestries' complex system of allegorical symbols is lost, but they are thought to depict the five senses, plus a sixth. The main figures of the tapestries are surrounded by the millefleur ('thousand flowers') motif made up of multiple plants in simultaneous fruit and bloom – time and space

again collapsed into an image of abundance. Both the Bruegel painting and the tapestries are directly referenced by a series of faint 'endnotes' present on the back of the final paper work.

In his performance Keogh recounts the moment he first saw the tapestries at the Musée de Cluny. They hung suspended in a hushed, darkened room cooled by recycled air, in a state of suspended time. This austere environ was rudely punctuated by an elderly man who shifted in his seat to fart – a perfect expression of the excesses of the flesh, and its disruption of what is neatly preserved and venerated.

Moving through the spaces, the imagery, lighting and density of work intensifies, creating a final immersive environment that recalls a broken down version of the Musée de Cluny's tapestry room, but also a set with no clear 'on' or 'off stage'. Collages spill off their backdrops to hang in the space itself, disrupting a hierarchy of meaning that composition might impose. Images disassemble and interpose, fold and unfold, cuing their manipulation in Keogh's performances, and recalling their mode of delivery to the exhibition. Their surfaces too bear evidence of their maker's means and movements; made on thin layout paper and folded into a suitcase for transportation between Berlin and London, the colleges' gridded fold marks recall maps or territories traversed. In another story unfurled in the performance, Keogh describes the work's first audience as the border police at Stansted airport (figured as a row of roasted pigs a-la Bruegel's painting), who were confused and disappointed to find his luggage full of drawings rather than tobacco.

Together, the physical elements of the exhibition form a phantasmagorical garden of abundance and suspended time, blossoming with images of worried cartoon clocks; sloths; inhalers; video-game avatars from Fortnite; shredded Microsoft Teams calendars; unicorns; and roast chickens that fly into your open mouth. This dense visualisation of iconographies parses histories of the radical left with medieval and early modern visual traditions as well as images and objects from Keogh's immediate experience.

The sculptures and collages will serve as backdrop and props in a performance which pull these ideas through each other in a tangled monologue, extending Keogh's use of objects, images and speech to create environments that coagulate memory, narrative, and history. Now that the performances have elapsed, an audio recording of Sam's performance has been added to the display.