

KINGS WITHOUT CROWNS

Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate, UK
January 30 – April 3, 2022

To All the Kings Who Have No Crowns is a small, haunting ink work by **Kate Bradbury** and the title of the extensive exhibition curated by Jennifer Lauren Gallery at Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate. It features 17 international, mostly emerging, artists that identify as self-taught and/or disabled; and includes artists working from the supported studios Creative Growth Art Center, USA, la 'S' Grand Atelier, Belgium, ActionSpace, UK, Geysso20, Germany, and Project Art Works, UK. The artists' distinct practices are highly idiosyncratic but have a connective dialogue in their methodologies. This multi-media exhibition – including the petite sculptures by **Pradeep Kumar** and the nearly 300 cm pastel drawing by **Éric Derochette** – considers a conceptual connection through exploring process and production.

The first room at Carl Freedman is predominantly figurative, which I found impactful. It allowed me to connect immediately with individual works. I enjoyed these introductions; making various eye contact with Bradbury's sculptures of found objects like *Sister Edith* (c. 2012), and with the pixel-like pupils of **Valerie Potter's** cross-stitched faces. For me though, the most lasting and intriguing gaze was with the surreal pencil-drawn portraits of **CJ Pyle**. His deft ability to render texture has a hyperreal haptic quality that entices with its hair-like braids and folds.

As I entered the second room, styles, silhouettes and mediums broaden, revealing aesthetic juxtapositions of monochromatic compositions with others of vibrant colour. Black and white drawings by **Chris Neate** oscillate between macro and micro, where I felt simultaneously as though I could be staring into the galaxy or – especially in reference to his spherical works: *Transformed* (2020) and *Evermore* (2019) – I could be studying a fantastical Petri dish under a microscope. As I continued to consider the theme of



Kate Bradbury *Suitcase People*, c. 2012

exploring process, the controlled precision witnessed in *Transformed* is also active in the oeuvres of **Norimisu Kokubo**, **Shinichi Sawada** and **Terence Wilde**. Process for Wilde feels more restorative, and Sawada's methodical in comparison to Neate's exploratory and spontaneous nature.

In contrast, the gestural non-representational works of **Joe Goldman** drew me into the final room. Abstraction is dominant here, featured in stunning text-based arrangements by **Dan Miller** and densely horizontal drawings by Derochette. Repetitive action echoes in all the works, where I was elated to see an extensive display of bold works by **Nnena Kalu**. The two distinct strands of Kalu's practice are witnessed via a set of her floor-based wrapped sculptures and four drawings (two complete and two "in progress"). Accompanied by a short video demonstrating Kalu's hypnotic drawing process, this installation thematically forms an apt closing punctuation for "Kings", emblematic of exploring mark-making as a concept and the act of production as performative.

LISA SLOMINSKI