

RUNNING AHEAD

CHARLIE GODET THOMAS

26 MAY - 09 JULY 2023

'There were many terrible things in my life and most of them never happened'.

-Michel de Montaigne

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Running on Ahead is a solo exhibition by Anglo-Bermudian artist Charlie Godet Thomas. Working across painting, sculpture, drawing, assemblage, sound, and writing, Thomas employs poetry, and word games to make playful connections between the visual and written – often with humorous and tragic affect.

Running on Ahead is conceived by Thomas as an autobiographical exploration of a single incident in Thomas' family history about which very little is known. Thomas' grandparents, who died before he was born, ran a greasy spoon called 'The Last Stop'. The café was in Kensal Green and was named according to the fact that it was located at the end of a bus route which ran from Peckham to Kensal Green and back again.

The café was mainly used by bus drivers who had finished their route. Unfortunately, a chip-pan fire burnt The Last Stop down entirely. All of the drivers and other repeat customers kept tabs which were logged in a book, which was also destroyed in the fire. After the disaster, those who owed money failed to come forward and the business was never able to reopen.

Thomas has no living family on his father's side, and so has no means of expanding on this aspect of his family history. *Running on Ahead* attempts to unpick generational memory, loss, and the inevitable distortions inherent in the stories that we tell and are told. Fire and smoke become analogous to memory and fiction, with the real and imagined becoming blurred, unstable and shifting.

At the heart of *Running on Ahead* is a small model of a London rooftop.

Titled *Ash and Narrow Sky (2023)*, it depicts an imagined building, moss-like, seemingly damp and degrading. A plume of words spews from its chimney. This smoke-like poem explores the movement of Thomas' grandparents from Wales to London, a decision made to avoid the dangers and hardships of mining. In previous similar works, Thomas has suggested that these small model-like sculptures are a way of scaling down and comprehending personal or collective events which often seem overwhelming.

In the centre of the space hang two mobiles, *Cheques and Balances (Exchange)* and *Cheques and Balances (Fall)*. These works explore precarity through motifs which might be found in the everyday life of a small café business, namely the exchange of money from one hand to another, and the carrying and dropping of a plate. A mobile as a form is precarious by design. The weight of the individual painted brass plates counter-balancing one another. The mobiles circle themselves slowly, the imagery animated in a slow-motion which never comes to a conclusion, the money never received or given, the plate never breaking.

Throughout the exhibition plays a sound piece – *A Rebirth*. The piece takes a short, four second accidental recording of Thomas' late father Allen, the only recording that Thomas has of his father's voice. In the original recording, the words spoken are "Rebirth" followed by "Renaissance". This accidental recording is of Allen reading a fragment of a crossword clue and subsequently the answer.

Thomas has collaborated with long-time friend, musician and writer Mike Barrett to make *A Rebirth*. Barrett has zoomed in to the sample, mining out the tiniest grains which make up the file, with the result that this seemingly small sound clip becomes infinitely larger, unveiling whole melodic potential at scale.

Alongside these works Thomas also presents four small works on paper of drawn and painted mise-en-scènes in soft yellow twilight. Two use the image of the shop window to explore the idea of being separated from events of the past, where there are vague silhouettes and shadows but little details as to what is unfolding, or has unfolded. Two others imagine interiors, perhaps stage sets which wait to be occupied by unknown characters who seemingly never turn up.

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Charlie Godet Thomas currently lives and works in Mexico City. He studied a BA in Fine Art (Sculpture) at Manchester School of Art (2009) and an MA in Fine Art (Sculpture) at the Royal College of Art, London (2014), where he was awarded the Bermuda Arts Council Scholarship and the Peter Leitner Scholarship.

Thomas has been exhibited widely including: Museo Jumex, Mexico City, MX; BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK; 14th Bermuda Biennial, The Bermuda National Gallery, BM; Ladrón galería, Mexico City, MX; Carillon Gallery, Texas, US; VITRINE Basel, CH and London, UK; Assembly Point, London, UK; Nicoletti Contemporary, London, UK; Paradise Works, Manchester, UK; Bloc Projects, Sheffield, UK; RCA/ECA Edinburgh Sculpture Court, Edinburgh, UK; Material Vol.7, Mexico City, MX; Frieze Sculpture 2019, London, UK; POPPOSITIONS, Brussels, BE;

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