

K E V I N M C N A M E E - T W E E D

Born 1984, Stanford, California
Lives and works in Iowa City

Education

- 2020 MFA, University of Iowa
- 2019 MA, University of Iowa
- 2008 BFA, New York University

Solo Exhibitions

- 2020 *Tableaux Vivant*, Steve Turner, Los Angeles
- 2019 *Literature*, Steve Turner, Los Angeles
 Beret Debt, Devening Projects, Chicago
- 2018 *Already Not Yet*, Shrine Gallery, New York
 Slow Rocket, 57W57, New York
- 2017 *Little Hawk Field*, Rod Barton, London
 New Top Old Bottom, Left Field, San Luis Obispo
 The End, Bay Space, Portland
 Self-Tourism, MoHA, Austin
- 2016 *Handmade Books*, The Menil Collection Bookstore, Houston
 Bread In North Carolina Butter In Tennessee, To_Bridges_, The Still House Group, New York
 100 Views, Lower Left Gallery, Austin
- 2015 *Words*, Installation at Austin Bergstrom Airport
 Words, Pump Project, Austin
 Sherts and Dreams, Las Cruces, Austin
- 2014 *Karl's Korner*, Bolm Project Space, Austin
 Books, Little Berlin, Philadelphia
 Books, Co-Lab Projects, Austin
- 2013 *Shit Show*, Eleven Seventeen Garland, Austin
- 2012 *Rocks*, Big Medium Gallery and Project Space, Austin

Group Exhibitions

- 2020 Curated exhibition by Kevin McNamee-Tweed, Steve Turner, Los Angeles (upcoming)
 ALAC (with Steve Turner), Los Angeles
- 2019 Sunday Art Fair (with Steve Turner), London
 Art Berlin (with Steve Turner)
 Enter Art Fair (with Steve Turner), Copenhagen
 Free Spirit News: Fourth Dimensional Issues, Melanie Flood Projects and Adams and Ollman, Portland
 Summer Soup, Three Four Three Four, Brooklyn
 Highway Blues, Underdonk, New York
 Power of Ten, Steve Turner, Los Angeles
 Art Brussels (with Steve Turner)
- 2018 Untitled, Miami Beach (with Steve Turner)
 Pablo, Cabinet Printemps, Dusseldorf
 Swab Barcelona Contemporary Art Fair (with Dutton Gallery)
 Spring 1883 (with Dutton Gallery), Melbourne
 Afire, Skylab Gallery, Columbus
 All You Can See, Rizzutto Gallery, Palermo, Italy
 NADA New York (with Dutton Gallery)
- 2017 *Born To Run*, Lane Meyer Projects, Aspen
 Another Place, Shrine, New York
 Spring 1883 (with Dutton Gallery), Sydney

- GIFC, The Hole, New York*
Eyes Ears Nose Etc Etc, Left Field, San Luis Obispo
Zing Zam Blunder, Harbinger Projects, Reykjavik
Mysticeti: Jonathan Ryan Storm & Kevin McNamee-Tweed, Molasses Books, Brooklyn
All American, PM/AM, London
GIFC, Art Athina, Athens
Part IV, Magic the Gallery, Austin
 2016 *A Room With a View, Eddy's Room, Brooklyn*
Return Policy, The Still House Group, New York
In Residence, Las Cruces, Austin
 2015 *A Little Me Time, The Museum of Human Achievement, Austin*
Coming To Terms, Little Berlin, Philadelphia
Bazt, Flux Factory, New York
Desktop Archeology, The Museum of Human Achievement, Austin
Austin Pavilion at Art City
 2014 *Conspectus, Co-Lab Projects, Austin*
AHöM, The Museum of Human Achievement, Austin
 2013 *A Catalogue, Tiny Park Gallery, Austin*
F.R. Etchen Collection, Big Medium, Austin
The Drawing Show, Pump Project, Austin
 2012 *Farewell, Wardencllyffe Gallery, Austin*
Medium Small, Big Medium, Austin
The Monster Show, Domy Books, Austin
 2007 *Period, Rosenberg Gallery, New York*

Residencies and Awards

- 2019 Mildred Pelter Fellowship
 2018 Wilhelm and Jane Bodine Fellowship, Iowa City
 2017 Iowa Arts Fellowship
 Artist in Residence, Bay Space, Portland
 2016 Montello Foundation Fellowship
 Artist in Residence at The Range, Saguache, Colorado
 Artist in Residence, Montello Foundation, Nevada
 2013 Best Work of Art 2013-2014, Austin Critics Table
 Best Curation of Group Exhibition 2013-2014, Austin Critics Table
 2012 Best Solo Exhibition 2012-2013, Austin Critics Table

Bibliography

- 2020 Ollman, Leah. "Commentary: I visited four reopened art galleries. The experience was not what I expected," *Los Angeles Times*, September 16
 Zellen, Jody. "Kevin McNamee-Tweed: 'Tableaux Vivant' More Than Meets the Eye," *ArtnowLA*, August 16
 Hudson, Suzanne. "Kevin McNamee-Tweed," *Art Forum*, January
 2019 Storm, Rebecca. "Kevin McNamee-Tweed's Literature," *Editorial Magazine*, November
 2018 "Featured Artist: Kevin McNamee-Tweed," *Los Angeles Review of Books*
 2017 Heinrich, Will. "What To See In New York," *The New York Times*, July 27
 Greenwood, Caitlin. "The Exit Interview," *The Austin Chronicle*, March 10
 LeRoux, Ayden. "The Power of Refusal: Kevin McNamee-Tweed's Departure from Austin," *Glasstire*, January 28
 2016 "Feature: Kevin McNamee-Tweed," *Fields Magazine*, September
 2015 "2015: Our Top Fives," *Fields Magazine*, December
 McCollom, Caitlin. "Deciding to Become An Artist While Making Art," *Arts and Culture Texas*, September 8

- Athent, Dallas. "Molasses Books Launches A Book Titled, Well, 'Books': Get It Now," *Bushwick Daily*, August 24
- Schwaiger, Seth Orion. "Review: Books by Kevin McNamee-Tweed," *Austin Chronicle*, August 14
- Marino, Rebecca. "Q+A with Kevin McNamee-Tweed," *Conflict of Interest*, April 27
- Otterbein, Holly. "Interview with Kevin McNamee-Tweed," *City Paper*
- 2014 Ball, Lilly. "New Mysteries. New Day. Fresh Doughnuts: An Interview with Kevin McNamee-Tweed," *Forth Magazine*, December 16
- Potraz, Kathryn. "Laugh Until You Cry." *Paste*, December 9
- Gosling, Emily. "Self-Help, Poo, & Existential Questions: KMT's Books," *It's Nice That*, November 20
- Burse, Stephanie. "The Form Review; Kevin McNamee-Tweed at Little Berlin," *The St. Claire*, October 31
- Rhea, Quinten. "Interview with Artist Kevin McNamee-Tweed," *KOOP Radio*, Austin, August 10
- 2012 van Ryzin, Jeanne Claire. "Review: *Rocks*," *Austin American-Statesman*
- Brenner, Wayne Alan. "Worth Your Weekend Time," *Austin Chronicle*
- Wlody, Janet. "Kevin McNamee-Tweed: *Rocks*," *Gessato*
- Breaux, Adrienne. "Rocks," *2 Modern*

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

STEVE TURNER



Kevin McNamee-Tweed: *Probable Presence*
March 20–May 1, 2021

Steve Turner is pleased to present *Probable Presence*, a solo exhibition of new work by Iowa City-based Kevin McNamee-Tweed consisting of nearly sixty small-scale works: ceramic paintings, paintings on fabric, drawings and an artist's book.

McNamee-Tweed's drawings and ceramic paintings are no larger than a sheet of letter-sized paper, while his paintings on fabric span upwards from there, the largest equal to a newspaper spread. The ceramic paintings are irregularly shaped, textured with incised lines and pinches of clay, and finished with a wide range of glazes. The drawings are on irregularly shaped pieces of paper with lines that are scratchy, sinuous, dense or spare. The paintings on fabric reveal process, some with pencil or ink, suggesting an edit, some with a collaged element and many finished with a hand-made frame.

McNamee-Tweed's works depict images that reflect the artist's wide array of thoughts and observations in which words figure prominently. Long Red Haired Woodpecker is a literal depiction of a long-haired woodpecker pecking a tree with its long red hair hanging down. It is a species of the artist's invention, not to be confused with the actual "hairy woodpecker" or "downy woodpecker." Stop exists in two versions: as a ceramic painting and as an acrylic on canvas painting. Both depict the word "STOP" spelled backwards with each letter also depicted backwards. Another fanciful image also exists in two different works: Painter, Thinker, Creator (The Boats) and Painter, Boats. Both show a painter in front of his outdoor easel as he looks at a landscape featuring boats on a tree-lined sea. In contrast, the painter's canvas shows only two blobby shapes against a blue background. Three four-letter words—long, stop and boat—loom large in each work.

As words are prominent in McNamee-Tweed's paintings and drawings, they are nearly entirely absent in his latest artist's book, where the only words to appear are those on the cover: "Kevin McNamee-Tweed Paintings." Inside are 150 photographs of signage, ranging from the handmade to the mass produced, each captured by McNamee-Tweed with a simple digital camera, never a phone, during the months leading up to the exhibition. According to the artist, the book functions as a catalog of signs.



Probable Presence. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2021



Probable Presence. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2021



Probable Presence. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2021

STEVE TURNER



Kevin McNamee-Tweed: *Tableaux Vivant*
July 25–August 29, 2020

Steve Turner is pleased to present *Tableaux Vivant*, a solo exhibition by Kevin McNamee-Tweed which features a selection of new ceramic paintings which are his largest and most complicated works to date. Each shows a salon-like interior with a myriad of disparate images. In one of the works, *TXT*, all of these images nicely coexist: an active volcano, a cover of the fictional Iowa Review, a spider hanging from its web, a round mammal standing on its hind legs, a hexagonal trade sign with a leaf pattern, an ad with contorted fingers and the word “DONT,” a houseboat at sea with a palm tree at the edge of land, a seesaw with a four-headed person on one end and three-headed person at the other, a sculpture of a trumpet-blowing figure riding a rooster, a headless pegasus with a large “P” where it’s head would be, a pollywog in an enclosed glass sphere with a tailed frog just outside the glass. In his essay on the artist in the new monograph, *Ceramic Paintings*, Andrew Berardini writes, “This is a world of dreams and memories that erupt into pictures, they are signs of the new flowers and new stars sprinkling over the fields and skies of the fleeting, empty outer world. A sign of what is and what was and had been and can be and it is only ever a picture away.”

The gallery is also releasing two publications to coincide with *Tableaux Vivant*. *Kevin McNamee-Tweed: Ceramic Paintings* is the artist’s first comprehensive monograph on his ceramic works. It includes essays by Andrew Berardini and John Dilg as well as an interview by Lauren Moya Ford. It is bound in cloth, has 248 pages and 123 color plates. It will be available on August 1st on the gallery’s new e-commerce website and is \$75 plus shipping and handling. The second publication, *Tableaux Vivant*, consists of fifty new poems by McNamee-Tweed, illustrations of recent works including those in the exhibition, and a constellation of related material. It will also be available on the gallery’s e-commerce website.

Kevin McNamee-Tweed (b. 1984) grew up near Chapel Hill, North Carolina before studying at New York University where he earned a BFA (2008). After living in Austin, Texas for seven years, he moved to Iowa City to enroll in the MFA program at the University of Iowa where he earned an MFA (2020). He has had solo exhibitions at The Still House Group, New York (2016); Rod Barton, London (2017); Shrine Gallery, New York (2018); Devening Projects, Chicago (2019) and Steve Turner, Los Angeles (2019). *Tableaux Vivant* is his second solo exhibition at Steve Turner. McNamee-Tweed lives and works in Iowa City.



Tableaux Vivant. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2020



Tableaux Vivant. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2020



Tableaux Vivant. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2020



Tableaux Vivant. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2020



ALAC. Installation view, Los Angeles, 2020



ALAC. Installation view, Los Angeles, 2020

STEVE TURNER



Kevin McNamee-Tweed: *Literature*
October 19–November 16, 2019

Steve Turner is pleased to present *Literature*, Kevin McNamee-Tweed's debut solo exhibition in Los Angeles which features over one hundred objects across various media and from different series. There are two groups of paintings, one in glazed ceramic and another which the artist calls his "butterfly" series which consists of rectangular canvases with two pairs of circular forms flanking a vertical line. McNamee-Tweed is also presenting drawings and relief sculptures that resemble shelves as well as found objects and printed ephemera.

Kevin McNamee-Tweed (b. 1984) grew up near Chapel Hill, North Carolina before studying at New York University where he earned a BFA (2008). After living in Austin, Texas for seven years, he moved to Iowa City to enroll in the MFA program at the University of Iowa where he will earn an MFA (2020). He has had solo exhibitions at The Still House Group, New York (2016); Rod Barton, London (2017); Shrine Gallery, New York (2018) and Devening Projects, Chicago (2019). *Literature* is his first solo exhibition at Steve Turner, Los Angeles. He lives and works in Iowa City.



Literature. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2019



Literature. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2019



Literature. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2019



Literature. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2019



Literature. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2019



Sunday Art Fair. Installation view, London, 2019



Sunday Art Fair. Installation view, London, 2019



Art Berlin. Installation view, 2019



Art Berlin. Installation view, 2019



Art Berlin. Installation view, 2019



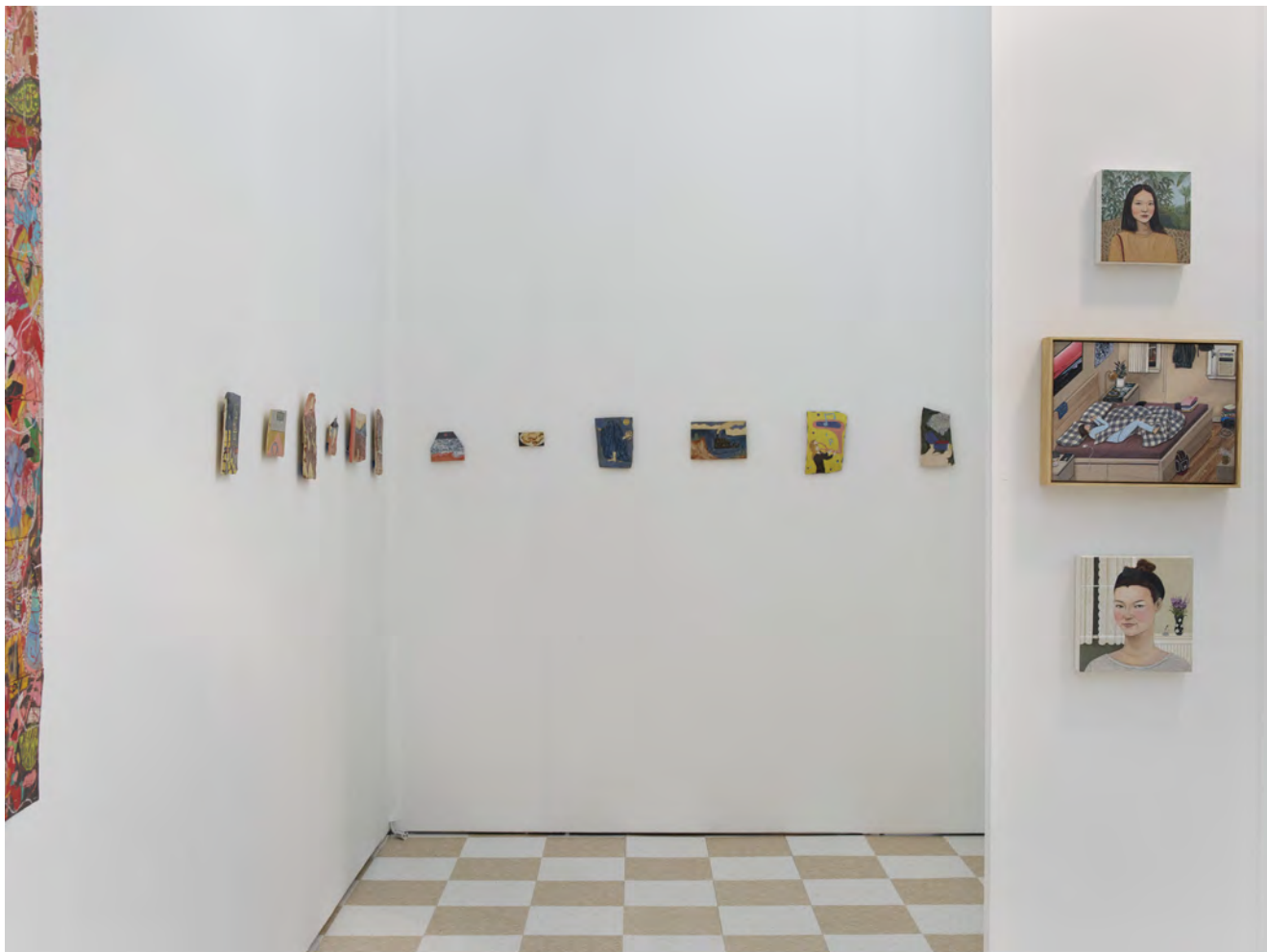
Enter Art Fair. Installation view, Copenhagen, 2019



Art Brussels. Installation view, 2019



Beret Debt. Installation view, Devening Projects, Chicago, 2019



Untitled, Miami Beach. Installation view, 2018



All You Can See. Installation view, Rizzuto Gallery, Italy, 2018



Slow Rocket. Installation view, 57W57, New York, 2018



Slow Rocket. Installation view, 57W57, New York, 2018



New Top Old Bottom. Installation view, Left Field Gallery, San Luis Obispo, 2017



Bread In North Carolina Butter In Tennessee. Installation view, *To_Bridges_*, The Still House Group, New York, 2016



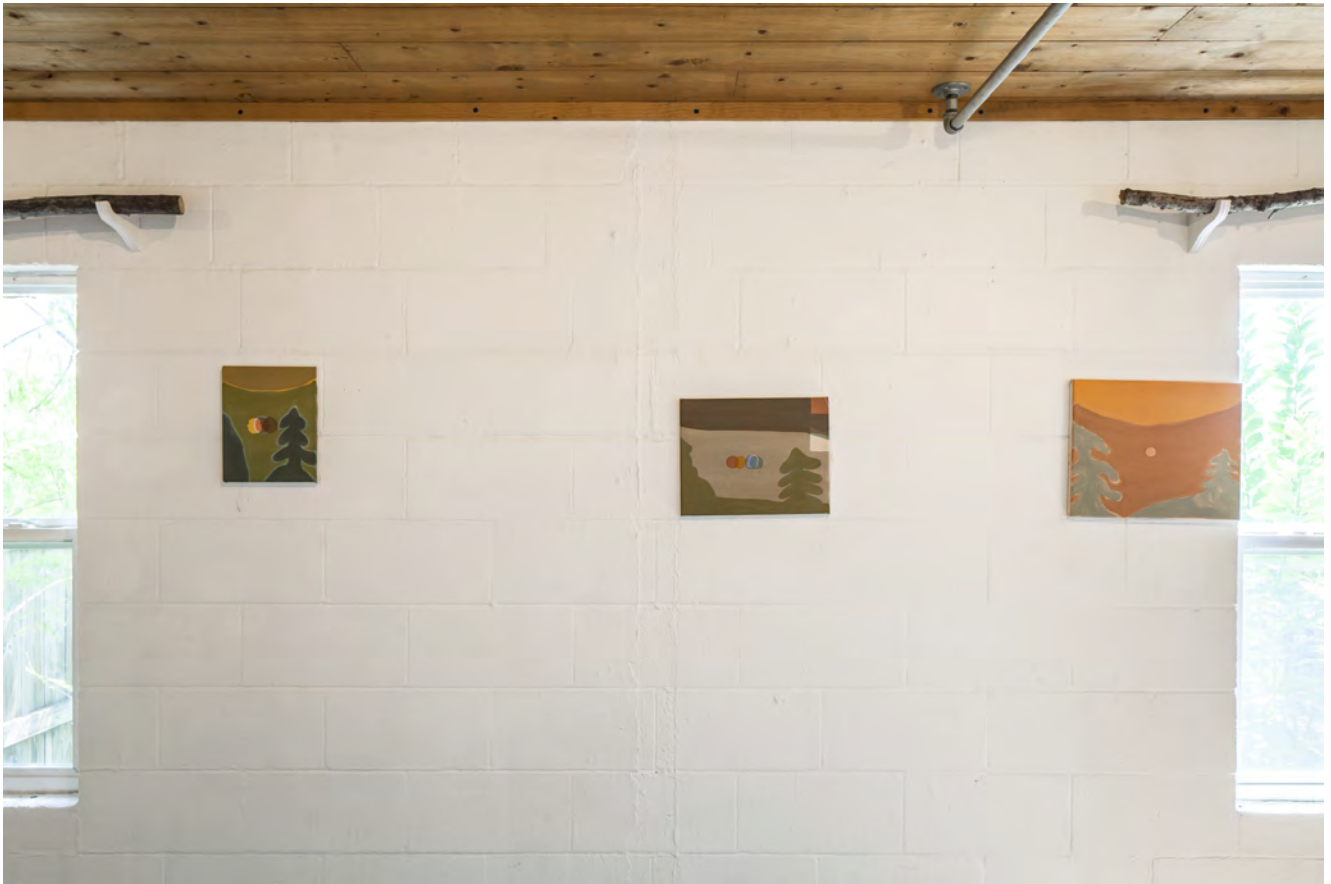
Bread In North Carolina Butter In Tennessee. Installation view, *To_Bridges_*, The Still House Group, New York, 2016



Bread In North Carolina Butter In Tennessee. Installation view, *To_Bridges_*, The Still House Group, New York, 2016



100 Views. Installation view, Lower Left Gallery, Austin, 2016



100 Views. Installation view, Lower Left Gallery, Austin, 2016



100 Views. Installation view, Lower Left Gallery, Austin, 2016

SELECTED WORKS

STEVE TURNER



Tabletop of Binaries, Monogamies, and Singularities, 2020

Glazed ceramic

9 ¹/₂ x 12 ¹/₄ inches (24.1 x 31.1 cm)

STEVE TURNER



Stardust, 2020
Glazed ceramic
11 ¹/₄ x 10 ³/₄ inches (28.6 x 27.3 cm)

STEVE TURNER



Painter, Thinker, Creator (The Boats), 2020

Glazed ceramic

7 1/2 x 9 inches (19.1 x 22.9 cm)

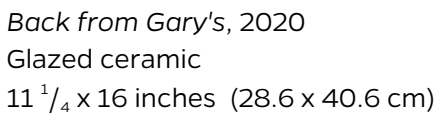
STEVE TURNER



Fantomas, 2020

Glazed ceramic

8 ¹/₈ x 7 inches (20.6 x 17.8 cm)



Glazed ceramic

11 ¹/₄ x 16 inches (28.6 x 40.6 cm)



Cultivator, 2020
Glazed ceramic
8 ⁵/₈ x 5 ³/₄ inches (21.9 x 14.6 cm)



Drop Off, Pick Up, Vietato Fumare, 2020
Glazed ceramic
10 x 9 ¹/₄ inches (25.4 x 23.5 cm)



House of Norks, 2020
Glazed ceramic
12 x 9 inches (30.5 x 22.9 cm)



Lobster TV, 2020

Glazed ceramic

7 ¹/₂ x 6 ¹/₄ inches (19.1 x 15.9 cm)



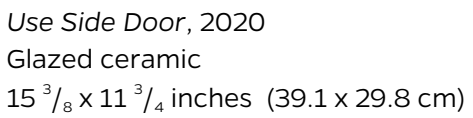
Nine To Five, 2020

Glazed ceramic

11 ¹/₈ x 9 ³/₈ inches (28.3 x 23.8 cm)



Roothster, 2020
Glazed ceramic
7 x 5 ³/₈ inches (17.8 x 13.7 cm)



Glazed ceramic

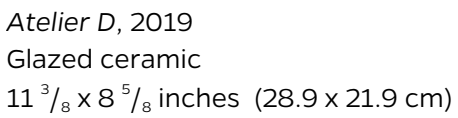
15 ³/₈ x 11 ³/₄ inches (39.1 x 29.8 cm)



Y Corner, 2020
Glazed ceramic
12 ³/₄ x 11 inches (32.4 x 27.9 cm)



Ash Blue Key, 2019
Glazed ceramic
19 ¹/₂ x 8 inches (49.5 x 20.3 cm)



Glazed ceramic

11 ³/₈ x 8 ⁵/₈ inches (28.9 x 21.9 cm)



Electric Fan, 2019
Glazed ceramic
9 x 7 inches (22.9 x 17.8 cm)



Hand on Stop, 2019

Ink and newsprint on muslin mounted to wood with affixed chapstick

2 ¹/₂ x 17 ¹/₂ x 5 ¹/₂ inches (6.4 x 44.5 x 14 cm)



Shroomz, 2019
Glazed ceramic
8 x 7 inches (20.3 x 17.8 cm)



Tide, 2019
Glazed ceramic
8 ³/₄ x 11 ¹/₄ inches (22.2 x 28.6 cm)

STEVE TURNER



Secrets, 2021
Pencil on mulberry paper
10 ¹/₂ x 8 ¹/₂ inches (26.7 x 21.6 cm)

STEVE TURNER



Matters, 2020

Pencil on mulberry paper

10 ¹/₄ x 8 ¹/₂ inches (26 x 21.6 cm)

16 ¹/₄ x 14 ¹/₂ inches (41.3 x 36.8 cm) Framed

STEVE TURNER



Brooklyn Painter, 2020

Pencil on mulberry paper

9 x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches (22.9 x 26.7 cm)

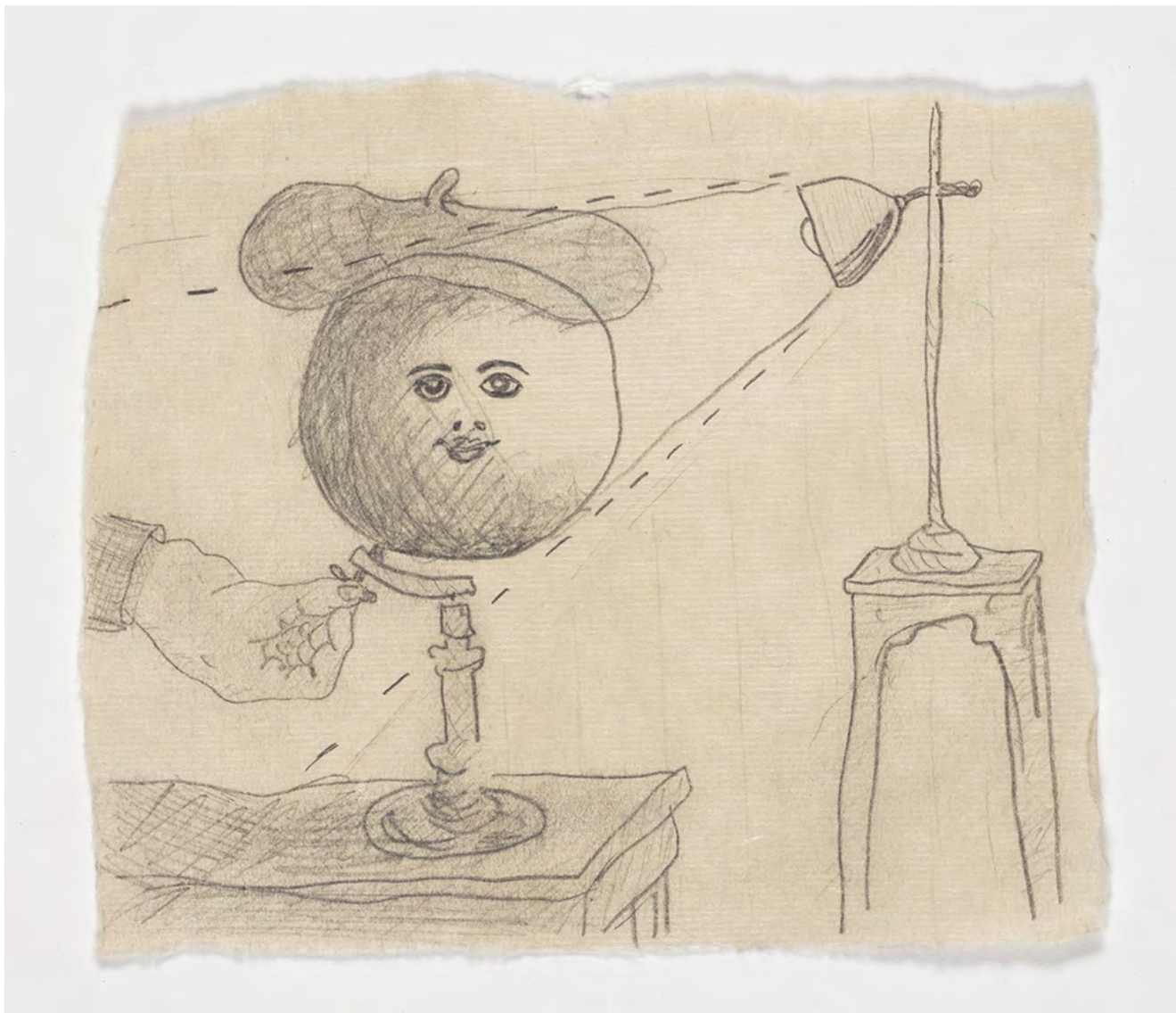
15 x 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches (38.1 x 41.3 cm) Framed



Cat, Bowl, Buddha, 2018
Monotype on mulberry paper mounted on wood
8 ³/₄ x 10 ¹/₂ inches (22.2 x 26.7 cm)



ghoti, 2018
Glazed ceramic
9 x 5 ¹/₂ inches (22.9 x 14 cm)



Research-based artist, 2018
Graphite on mulberry paper
4 ³/₄ x 5 ¹/₂ inches (12.1 x 14 cm)



Studio, 2018
Monotype on mulberry paper
9 x 10 1/2 inches (22.9 x 26.7 cm)



Walk, 2018
Glazed ceramic
6 x 6 inches (15.2 x 15.2 cm)



Lizard and fireflies, 2017
Monotype mulberry paper mounted on wood
11 x 8 inches (27.9 x 20.3 cm)

STEVE TURNER



Horse Painting, 2020

Acrylic and pencil on canvas with artist frame
21 x 17 inches (53.3 x 43.2 cm)

STEVE TURNER



Painter, Boats, 2020

Acrylic and pencil on cotton with artist frame

19 x 24 ³/₄ inches (48.3 x 62.9 cm)

STEVE TURNER



Mountain Arrives Non-Visually, First, 2020

Acrylic on canvas with artist frame

16 x 18 inches (40.6 x 45.7 cm)

SELECTED PRESS

Commentary: I visited four reopened art galleries. The experience was not what I expected

By Leah Ollman | September 16, 2020



One of Kevin McNamee-Tweed's glazed ceramic pieces (9.5 inches by 10.5 inches) on view at Steve Turner Gallery in L.A. (Steve Turner Gallery)

Such robust, tightly conceived shows can feel like a generous gift to screen-sapped eyes, distracted minds and defeated spirits. Steve Turner Gallery was featuring a hearty trio of solo presentations: stylized portraits by Paris-based Rebecca Brodskis, assemblage portraits by New York-based David Shrobe and, most engrossing to me, “ceramic paintings” by Iowa City-based Kevin McNamee-Tweed.

McNamee-Tweed's modestly sized, irregularly shaped panels are glazed, embossed and incised with images and words excavated from the artist's mental attic — art prints, commercial signage, notes to self, calendar pages, flowers, smoking pipes. The neatened jumbles brought to mind Manny Farber's domestic still-life self-portraits, themselves descended from centuries-old paintings by artists who used wall and tabletop as organizing surfaces of the memory and psyche, as well as storyboards of cultural history.

Kevin McNamee-Tweed: 'Tableaux Vivant'

More Than Meets the Eye

by Jody Zellen | August 16, 2020



Charming is one of the first words that comes to mind when looking at **Kevin McNamee-Tweed**'s seventeen glazed ceramic tableaux. Yet upon further consideration, charming might not best describe these works as there is more than meets the eye. The pieces, all less than twenty-inches tall, are jam-packed with drawn replicas of framed artworks, everyday objects, anomalies, doodles, texts, as well as personal and art historical references. McNamee-Tweed hand crafts ceramic panels into irregularly shaped or round-edged rectangles and then uses the clay as a drawing surface.

Each piece in the exhibition, **Tableaux Vivant**, features an interior space depicting a fragment of a wall that is hung salon style with a wide array of objects, as well as a table-top or floor (like one might see in an antique shop) cluttered with things. While flat, these still lifes also have dimensionality due to McNamee-Tweed's skillful rendering, shading and glazing of the clay. The drawn line is at once exact and simplistic as if a coloring book illustration. Yet because the works are executed as ceramic, they transcend traditional drawings.

Within the pieces, McNamee-Tweed juxtaposes random objects to weave together quirky narratives that do not always cohere. **Use Side Door** (all works 2020) is a display of more than thirty objects. On a wall are framed artworks and canvases no larger than a few inches

each. These include portraits, flowers, a poster of an old-model car sinking in a lake with the letters X O X O... below, a sign for bagels and one that reads: **NO NEW / HIPPIES / OLD USE SIDE**. On a table at the bottom of the tableau is a lamp or statue, a spray bottle and various other unrelated objects.



Petrarcha

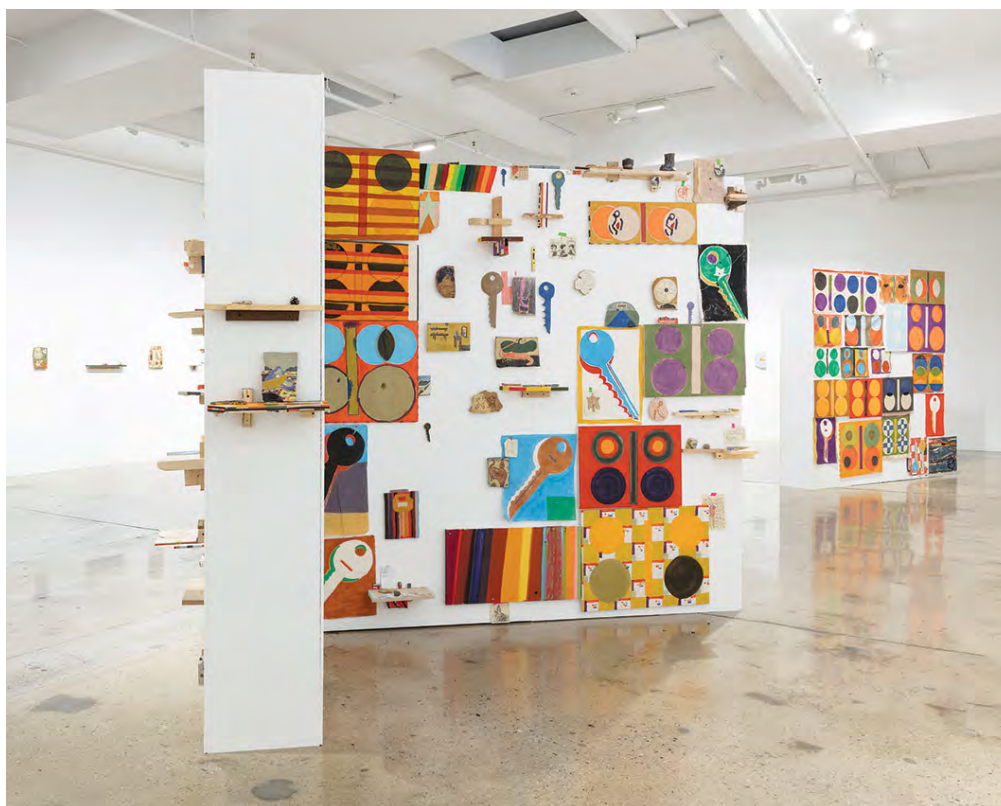
Y Corner has ragged edges and feels like a fragment of a fragment. Within the composition, hanging on a brown-toned wall is a calendar with a cartoony image of a blue deer with orange antlers, a poster of an owl that could be a fraternity poster, the letters “F” and “Y,” as well as miscellaneous images including a black and white cow and an alien head. On the desk that abuts the wall on the bottom right is a single can of beer, or perhaps soda. **Petrarcha** references the pre-**Renaissance** scholar/poet, **Francesco Petrarca** and is a more oval-shaped tablet with brown shelves on which sits a smiling cat as well as a small television with the image of a red-roofed house surrounded by grass, trees and a cloud filled sky. Two line drawings of interiors are taped to the wall amidst a few other drawings and random objects on a table. While the work is situated in the present, it seems to also reference the past.

There is a lot to look at in McNamee-Tweed's compositions and the looking is pleasurable. Not only is the use of ceramic unusual, but McNamee-Tweed's choice of subject matter is also idiosyncratic. McNamee-Tweed has a knack for combining unrelated elements and making meaning from these seemingly random juxtapositions.



Back from Gary's

ARTFORUM



View of “Kevin McNamee-Tweed,” 2019.

Kevin McNamee-Tweed

STEVE TURNER

For his solo debut in Los Angeles, the Iowa City–based artist Kevin McNamee-Tweed clustered dozens of objects—many small enough to hold in your palm, and all solicitous of visual if not tactile intimacy—into wall-mounted vignettes. Shelflike relief sculptures made of found wood braced diminutive glazed ceramics. Alongside these altar-like installations were carefully considered arrangements of his earthenware paintings (flat panels the size of a book or a tablet), acrylics on muslin with bilateral symmetry (hence their designation as the “Butterfly Series,” 2019–), drawings, and ephemera. Despite the small scale of each item, the gallery was full; the overwhelming sense of proliferation and industry was amply reinforced by the checklist, a thick, stapled stack of many, many pieces of paper, which still did not form an exhaustive inventory. Somehow, this profusion of images nevertheless cohered into motifs—keys and domestic interiors, certain appropriated art-historical and more vernacular sources—that migrated from sketches on paper to other media. Drawing was, so to speak, a throughline, one that acknowledged the capaciousness of a surface that might support McNamee-Tweed’s mark-making, which is maybe another form of writing.

One of the first shelf forms viewers encountered, the narrow, muslin-coated *Herbal Cure* (all works 2019), held the object *Penmanship*, which recalls an inkwell. The overall assembly of the rough-hewn ledges running in a horizontal line across the wall registered as a series of materialized em dashes. Their thin profiles meant that, seen from a distance, they seemed to cut holes in the space, even as they projected from the wall. Moving closer, one could see their sutures and elaborate surface treatments: Many were adorned with fragments of words cut from newsprint or were partially covered in fabric or paint. The works are literally containers of content that redouble the function of the vessels.

Interspersed with these word banks on two long walls were the clay “paintings,” featuring subjects including a pig with a human face, a psychedelic mushroom, and a piece of toast. A few works combined these two mediums: In *Hand on Stop*, the horizontal support accommodated a little ceramic disk titled *Megx* and a landscape scene scored in clay and fired with rich colors called *The Bridge*. The ersatz composition extended onto the wall, where McNamee-Tweed had drawn a little triptych of green, red, and purple monochromes that hovered near the upper right of the physical work. *DiosEsUnSecreto* (God Is a Secret) demonstrated another compelling strategy for layering images: The ceramic slab represents a picture gallery, evoking visual compendiums that, among other things, perform mastery over different genres and styles. McNamee-Tweed propped up not only physical objects, but also interconnected traditions of making and displaying work.

A book that McNamee-Tweed published on the occasion of this exhibition illuminates his own compendium of sources. The cover photo, of a key painted on a garage, repeated higher on the building as a sign, introduces the play of references for interpretive acts: A locksmith sign also becomes a key to what lies within. The reference file is filled with photos of everything from vintage cartoons to floor tiles, paint swatches, advertisements, a view of Blinky Palermo’s studio, and documentation of one of Daniel Buren’s “ballets,” during which performers paraded his stripe paintings through the streets of New York. The publication confirms the lightness with which McNamee-Tweed wields his expansive vocabulary and his commensurate wit, and creates the impression that the artist’s images might simply float free if not for his endless attempts to ground the material. Among pages depicting architectures and animals (cats, a rabbit, squirrels, a bear), street scenes of New York, and sacred spaces, readers came across a poem by the artist (who is also a writer and curator) and texts relating to the show’s title, “Literature.” On the 109th page, amid shots of a storefront, a screenshot of a search for hank hill butt, and graffiti reading MCRIB IS BACK, the poet Bradley King defines this key term: “Literature appears to be a collection of images taken on your phone and sent to someone special.”

— Suzanne Hudson
January 2020

Kevin McNamee-Tweed's Literature

Rebecca Strom | November 15, 2019



Photos courtesy of the artist and Steve Turner Gallery

Imagine a comic book left out in the rain—its newsprint pages disintegrating, superimposing themselves onto each other, soggy fragments of speech blurbs pulling apart from one another. Or a deck of Tarot cards ripped into pieces, disparate scraps as small artefacts—recognizable symbols though their meaning obscured. For his debut solo show *Literature*, at Steve Turner Gallery, Kevin McNamee-Tweed presents a collection of diverse, multimedia works. Many of these works share the same fragmented qualities of the aforementioned examples—autonomous pieces of an imagined whole. Hooded figures, a mushroom, clutching hands, a whirring, yellow fan—all cast in roles across relief sculptures, paintings, and glazed ceramics. These works seem to function as chapters in a grander narrative, yet feel storied in their autonomy. *Literature* closes November 16th.



Featured Artist: Kevin McNamee-Tweed



Kevin McNamee-Tweed is an artist and curator based in Iowa City, Iowa. Originally from North Carolina, he received a BFA from New York University and will receive an MA and MFA from the University of Iowa in 2019. His work has been exhibited internationally, ranging from installations and visual art to handmade books and widely distributed publications. Recent projects include solo exhibitions at 57W57 ARTS (New York), Rod Barton (London), The Still House Group (NY) and The Menil Collection Books (Houston). In addition to a studio practice and independent curatorial projects, McNamee-Tweed has worked as Curator at Big Medium in Austin, Texas from 2012 to 2017.

Kevin McNamee-Tweed: The Exit Interview

As he leaves Austin, the award-winning curator and artist reflects on the city's artists and art community

BY CAITLIN GREENWOOD, FRI., MARCH 10, 2017

To be a part of Austin's nascent art scene is to know Kevin McNamee-Tweed. He arrived in Austin in 2009 and has been kicking around the city's galleries and studios since 2012, when he started curating Big Medium's Canopy gallery. He's snagged two Austin Critics Table Awards and three nominations for his curatorial work and exhibitions. His *Books* publication was released through Farewell Books, Raw Paw Press, and Molasses Books in 2015 and includes the fictitious title *Muskets and Mulberries: Trying to Be in Love When an Old Timey War Is Happening Around You*, which continues to produce snorts of joy even two years after the fact. His studio was a fixture at Big Medium's Bolm space, and he helped manage Bolm's other studios, including ATM Gallery. He's been in solo and group shows at Pump Project Art Complex, Co-Lab Projects, Lower Left, Las Cruces, the late Tiny Park, and most recently at the Museum of Human Achievement for his farewell show, "Self-Tourism." That's right, McNamee-Tweed is leaving Austin for greener pastures.



It's a shame to be losing him, as McNamee-Tweed has been one of the city's keenest artists, imbuing his art with a combination of satire and nostalgia, while creating a color-saturated aesthetic that still feels new, even throughout his tremendous breadth of work. Given his remarkable impact on Austin, it felt only right to pick his brain as he says goodbye to the city.

Austin Chronicle: *"Self-Tourism" contained hundreds of monoprints that documented your travels through the American West. What attracted you to monoprinting?*

Kevin McNamee-Tweed: I've always lusted over the image character of prints but had never done much more than screenprints. PrintAustin seemed like a good opportunity to try it out. Zac [Traeger, gallery director of MoHA] and I planned to show whatever I came up with at MoHA in January, which was about six months away at that point. I didn't actually try anything out except the monotypes, which I really enjoyed. It's essentially just like drawing, only backwards and

blind and with very little control. A lot of nice effects are possible, [and there are] many, many mistakes. Now that I have some fluency with the technique, there is less divorce between my intention and the result, but still there is some crazy shit that happens. It's a dynamic medium.

"Self-Tourism" was always going to be about my travels to Nevada and Colorado, but I envisioned something quite different. That's the nice thing about material-based modes of creative inquiry; you work within the confines of the truth that is possible in that medium. I couldn't do what I'd originally wanted to do, but monotypes were such a mindfuck that I was distracted and stimulated enough to bust out 369 of them for the show.

AC: *The American South is a large portion of your personal history and often finds its way into your work. How do you think Austin has impacted that?*



KMT: The American South was a good mythology to have in my pocket when I went to school in New York. At a time when you're constantly confronting yourself – all versions past, present, and future – it was nice to have my Southernness as an anchor. New York was also overwhelming after growing up in North Carolina, so I found comfort in it. I still do.

I don't know how Austin makes its way into my imagery and narrative. I do know that it has been a place where I could actually make work. The passage of time here has a good personality about it which I find conducive to my version of productivity. The weather, too. People are half-easy here, which I like. The whole relaxed-with-a-kick thing is great.

Certainly the color situation in Texas has influenced my work quite heavily, but I haven't made a lot of imagery based on Austin or Texas. I don't think it's because it doesn't move me. It's more that it didn't jibe with my drawing style, like I couldn't draw the trees and plants here and the land very well – it just didn't come out great. Sometimes that's just how it goes; you have to use the forms that offer themselves up to you. I'm better at drawing triangular trees – conifers – so that's

that. They look better and, since this is art, that's what matters.

AC: *As an artist, you've had the chance to showcase in galleries across town while also acting at the curator for Big Medium [a role that will continue remotely]. Having lived on both sides of the experience, how do you think artists can find success when they approach galleries?*

KMT: Have a flexible definition of success. When I look around at the ways my friends and colleagues are making lives as artists, here and elsewhere, a few things are clear: First, everyone has to puzzle it together for themselves, and second, it's going to suck sometimes. I'm OK, for the time being, living with financial uncertainty. That's probably important. I would say just make your work, worry about galleries later. It never really works to approach a gallery. If you make good work, are dedicated to it, the shows will come. And for emerging artists, it's important to be able to live with making work that you hate, that you know is not worth shit, but to keep on making things, trying new things, new voices, new languages, new techniques and materials. If you get hung up on the fact that your work is obviously not good, then you won't make it as an artist. The same is true for showing in galleries; if you freak out about not showing

in galleries, you'll trip up some. Soon enough, one of your friends will start a house gallery anyway, so don't worry.

AC: *How do you think curators can continue to create thoughtful exhibitions?*

KMT: Well, in a town where there is pretty much zero market pressure, galleries and artists have the freedom to present shows in a manner that aims to really support the work. Often a clean, neutral, 67-inch on-center hang is what serves the work best, but I'm interested in seeing shows in which you can really feel that the artist and curator have considered how the work should be engaged. Should it smell like peppermint in the gallery? Would it be nice or stupid to hide a painting near the ceiling? Should Erik Satie or Phish or Destiny's Child be playing, or should there be silence? Taking a risk in the world of art is pretty impossible because it's most likely that it won't come off as irreverent or visionary, rather it will reek, in all likelihood, of hack art clownery. That said, it's important to sprinkle in some half-baked decisions with the thoughtful editing and distilling required of a good exhibition. I just want to enjoy myself at an exhibition, but I'm pretty easy since I really like art. You're pretty fucked if you don't [like art], because gallery openings can be the absolute worst.

AC: *Selling art in Austin – why is it so hard?*

KMT: Very few artists are financially stable anywhere. The rest have day jobs. Austin is no different, but the lack of market here makes it impossible to claw your way toward financial independence. It sucks having to sell all your work to New York or L.A. or Dallas or Dubai. The price points here are totally unsustainable. Get a job. I recommend tech – there's lots of money in that, and they have great office kitchens. If you don't care about kombucha on tap, then see if you can work as little as possible and spend all your time making art.

“Austin doesn’t have a bunch of high-powered commercial galleries with vast clientele networks and decades of experience. We have artist-run spaces. We have no market, but we have a solid community.”

– Kevin McNamee-Tweed

AC: *What do arts institutions need to do to better serve the Austin arts community?*

KMT: I think Austin is doing pretty well. The institutions are abundantly aware of the limitations artists deal with here, and we all know how hard the spaces here work. It's just a different kind of town. The main thing that makes some places more financially viable for artists is that there is a market. That has its own problems. Austin doesn't have a bunch of high-powered commercial galleries with vast clientele networks and decades of experience. We have artist-run spaces. We have no market, but we have a solid community. As the great battle for the cultural identity of Austin rages on, our institutions can fight for artists. That means understanding what it means to live as an artist and engaging the powers that be. While all this is obviously important to me as a person devoted to a creative life, it can't be overstated how important sensitivity, openness, and generosity will be as neighborhoods continue to be made over. As the anchors of that ugly makeover, artists and arts institutions have a responsibility to not let everything get totally fucked up. Be good neighbors.

AC: *What do you think the greatest asset in Austin's arts community is?*

KMT: That artists are still calling the shots.

In terms of the stories I tell, plenty of Austin's personality has made it into my work. I have indulged the nationalistic themes of Texas identity a bit, too. I think I'll understand the ways this place has influenced my work better once I leave and put some time and miles between us.

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to live as an artist and engaging the powers that be. While all this is obviously important to me as a person devoted to a creative life, it can't be overstated how important sensitivity, openness, and generosity will be as neighborhoods continue to be made over. As the anchors of that ugly makeover, artists and arts institutions have a responsibility to not let everything get totally fucked up. Be good neighbors.

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The Power of Refusal: Kevin McNamee-Tweed's Departure from Austin

by Ayden Leroux January 28, 2017



In his latest show at the Museum of Human Achievement (MoHA) in East Austin, Kevin McNamee-Tweed shows 369 monoprints inspired by his travels. Titled *Self-Tourism*, it's scattered with narratives that oscillate between tranquility and calamity. The perspective moves from churches in Norway to a small town in Nevada where a mountain lion prowls Main Street; from brownstones in Chicago to a lone cabin

terrorized by fiendish blobs that might be wolves. Between all the stories there is some steadiness. One scene makes several appearances: a view of a room with three windows, a space heater, and a table, atop which rest a candle and an open book.



Untitled, 2016, monotype mounted on canvas on shelf with pecans and nail. Photo by Ayden LeRoux.

The prints are dusty tones of red, green, blue, yellow, and brown, and McNamee-Tweed's hand leaves smudges and soft marks that make some of the scenes hazy. His style recalls David Shrigley, but rather than a crisp black-and-white palette, McNamee-Tweed's peculiar drawings add a fog to the fatal and strange scenes he depicts.

"Mistakes happen in ways you have no power in," he says as he discusses his foray into this kind of printmaking. He talks about the freedom of losing control while trying to write backwards for the monotype process, giving up, and letting things be wrong. The prints that contain architectural components are particularly satisfying in McNamee-Tweed's stilted style. The geometry of a ladder leaning against a wall, the repeated imagery of windows, the angles of perspective for a storefront neighboring a wall covered in the word "graffiti" (not graffiti itself; a subtle nod to René Magritte's *The Treachery of Images*). His images of clothes, hangers, and coat racks also appeal; his

rudimentary style crystallizes as he approaches the way soft garments drape over stiff forms.



The End, 2017, monotype mounted on wood, shelf. Photo by Ayden LeRoux.

The invitation to try a new form for this show at MoHA hasn't held McNamee-Tweed back from creating a flood of work. He says he tends to "find a system and just plow," and the work seems unsystematically placed on the walls of MoHA, sprawling from down near a power outlet close to the ground to up near the top of the white walls of the gallery. McNamee-Tweed claims frames are "greedy," and as such, his images are propped up on dowels, paint stir sticks, and other scraps to create makeshift supports that splay across the wall and eschew the paradigm of squares and rectangles. These support mechanisms act as extensions of the work, covered in colored stains that share his diluted palette. Italian coins, unshelled pecans, pine cones, and nails rest atop the pieces, too, as if to couch them in their own materiality, to save them from being flat. Aside from the pieces on the walls, McNamee-Tweed is happy to let the majority of his prints sit in a heap on a table made out of saw horses, and let guests thumb through

them in the center of the gallery. Frames would make this tender work falsely precious —would serve only as a cage, keeping at bay the gentle humanity of it.



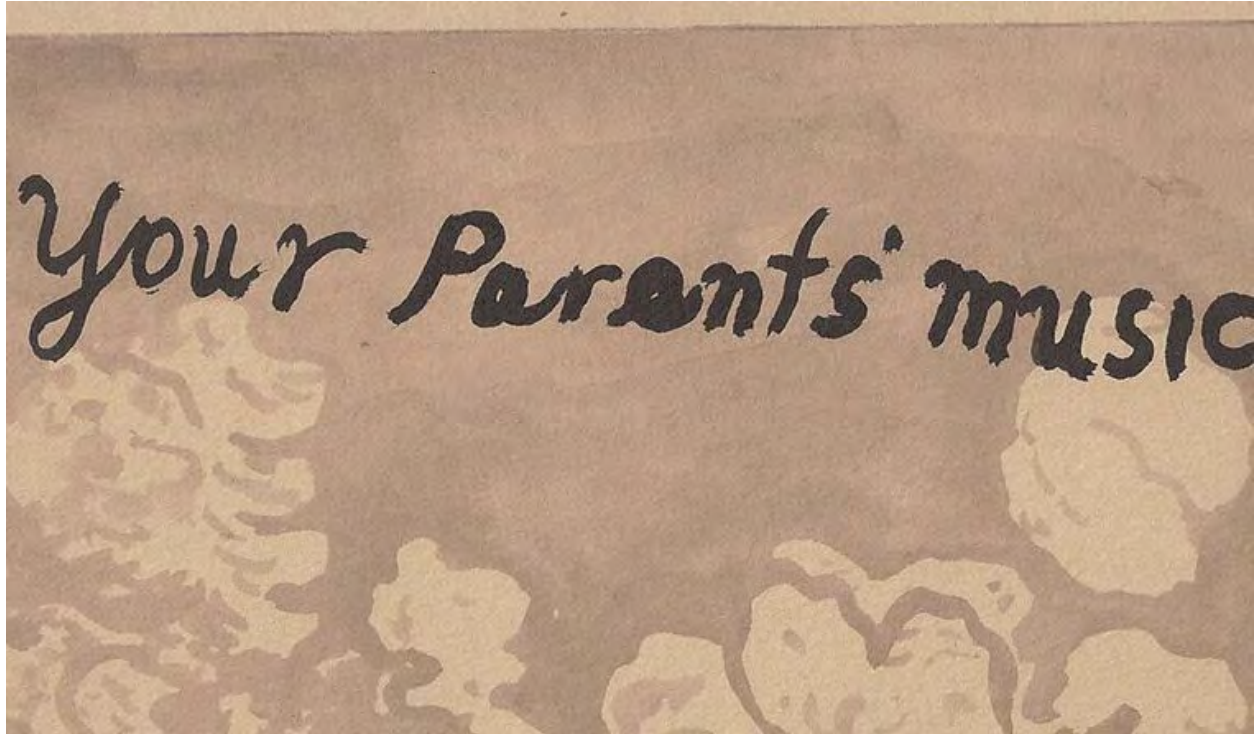
Untitled, 2016, monotype mounted on wood on shelf. Photo by Clayton Smith Westmeier.

The sheer quantity of the work is important. McNamee-Tweed assures me that 369 is not an exact count, joking, “It’s probably actually 368.” He admits he likes to mythologize the number of pieces in a body of work, and it is apparent from his previous projects like *Rocks*, *Books*, and *Flyers* that volume matters to him. The inundation is aiming for something. The sensation of looking at this work is like reading a narrative without a start or end point. Travel generally entails a destination, but with *Self-Tourism* there’s no ultimate arrival; only movement—continuous, coursing movement. It is fitting that McNamee-Tweed is leaving Austin by showing us all the other places he’s gone. The absence of Austin’s appearance in the images is felt.

On the surface, Kevin McNamee-Tweed’s work aestheticizes clumsiness and has the palpable tone of a trickster (Kokopelli appears often). But McNamee-Tweed’s

distinctive, untechnical style isn't simply meant to entertain. There's complexity and a certain loftiness to the comic who stays quiet while the audience laughs; it is the power of refusal. What's beyond the humor? The surface of jubilant play and imperfection in McNamee-Tweed's work gives way to a more existential bleakness. Fire makes many appearances: candles, flames licking a house, volcanoes. The heat appears peaceful until the tension of its potential destruction sinks in. The more time you spend with it, the more McNamee-Tweed's work embodies the simultaneous chaos and calm of the natural world. He punctures the pretension of the art world with a balance of fatalism and earnesty. "Humor is not a sustainable thing. It leaves the work and you're left with..." he trails off for a second, "...the redemptive nature [of] catastrophes." He offers the example of losing your house to a fire, saying it's a tragedy, but that it also "sets you free. It's easier to make out the shape of meaning."

'Self-Tourism' is up until February 10th at the Museum of Human Achievement in Austin.

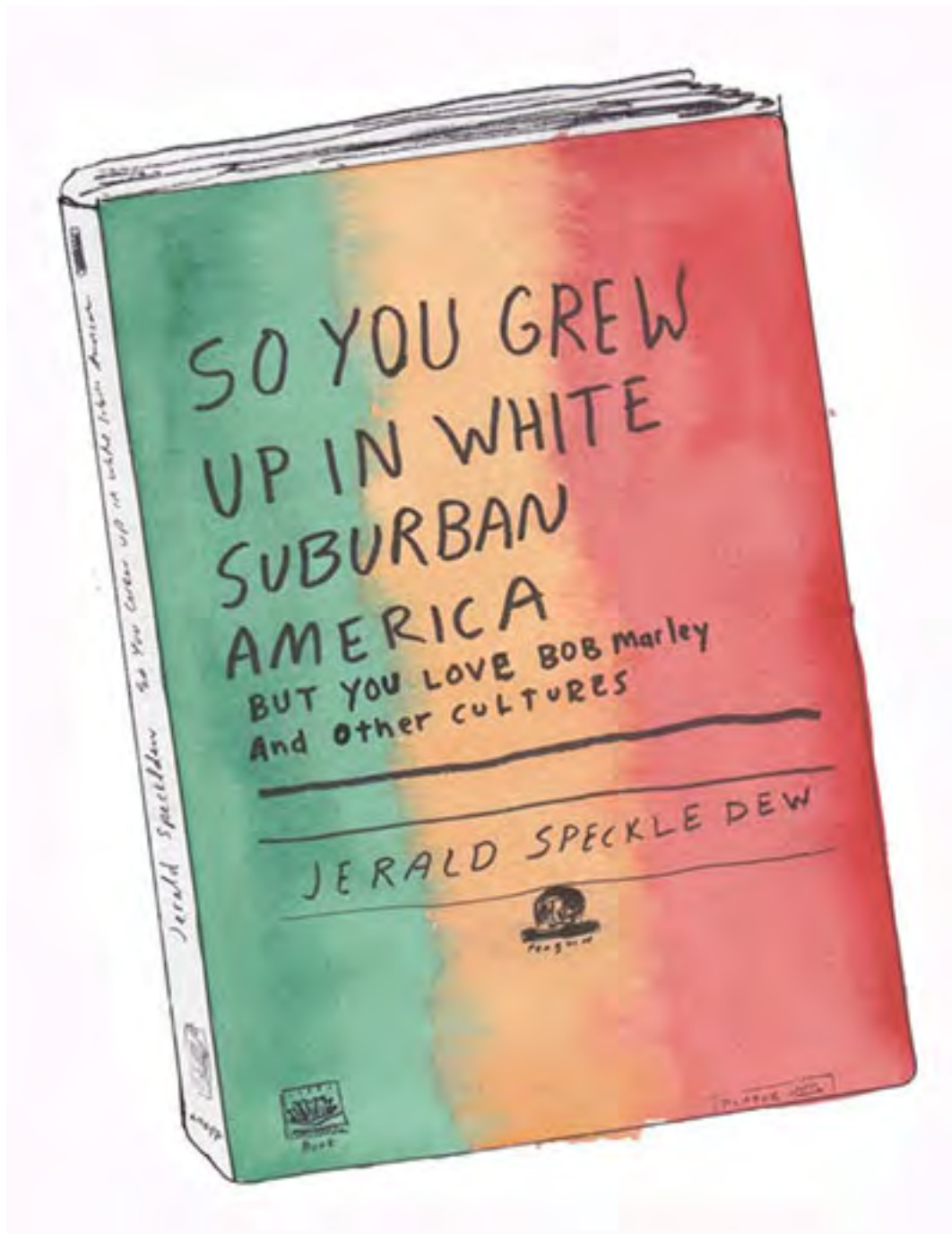


Kevin McNamee-Tweed, *Your Parents Music*. Courtesy the artist.

CAITLIN G. MCCOLLOM SEPTEMBER 8, 2015

KEVIN MCNAMEE-TWEED:

**Deciding to Become an
Artist while Making Art**



Kevin McNamee-Tweed, BobMarleyAndOtherCultures. Courtesy the artist.

In a busy setting like an exhibition opening or the loud bustling coffee shop where we chat over kombucha and iced tea, it's too easy to miss some of the softly expelled wit and wisdom of

Kevin McNamee-Tweed. He's a bit of a low-talker, forcing listeners to lean in to his words. He is a gentle soul but his brain is terrifically sharp and difficult to crack.

McNamee-Tweed is an artist who battles with his identity. He recently re-emerged as a visual artist after moving to Austin in 2010 where he also serves as the curator for Big Medium at Canopy. His work is humorous, cheeky and superficially playful, but also dark and enticing—making it difficult to determine where the artist stands. Between his current work, on view now at Las Cruces, and his contribution as a curator, Kevin McNamee-Tweed is a pillar of the Austin visual art community.

He has several shows up nationally but in Austin we have *Sherts and Dreams* at **Las Cruces** (a whimsical little boutique in the same building/shop complex as Farewell Books which also has its own dedicated gallery space), curated by Veronica Ortuño and on view through Sept.

29. *Sherts and Dreams* is attractive but without lacking humor. For the Sherts portion of the title the work references textile design by using pigment instead of paint. McNamee-Tweed says “I never really had a fully satisfying relationship with color in my art until this body of work.” And the ease of the limited palette certainly shows; the pieces look like a picture of the dessert from the seventies—a soft mix of red and blue and tan. The canvases are purposely poorly assembled: thin, weighty with too much canvas, but the pure pigment he uses to color their surfaces is a lovely play of color and composition, starkly minimalist expressionist paintings.



Kevin McNamee-Tweed, *Sherts (Yes 100)*, 2015. Courtesy the artist.

“The work represents a huge departure in the way I work, but it does not represent a departure from the things I look at,” he says. “This show ended up being different because it mutes a lot of the things I’m known for like humor and silliness, and I’m okay with how that happened.”

When McNamee-Tweed is not making art his time is consumed by his enormous contribution to the arts community of Austin as the curator for Big Medium. The shows at the space are exceedingly thoughtful and often surprising amidst Austin’s more standard visual culture. His risk-taking and overly curious attitude is present in his curatorial practice as well. Greg Pond & Jesse Cahn Thompson’s *Flat Earth Folded* was a sound installation that filled the gallery with some distinctly ethereal sounds that you could only hear upon holding your head against the elegant steel sheets set up around the gallery space. Ana Esteve-Llorens’ *Calle Merida* brought an internationally exhibiting artist into Austin and gave her the freedom and venue to create a lovely mix of some unexpected and pretty non-commercial works.



Kevin McNamee-Tweed, Installation view, *Shirts and Dreams*, 2015. Courtesy the artist.

A graduate of NYU, McNamee-Tweed started his education as a philosophy major before switching to studio art. It’s clear he sees the two disciplines as one and the same—the practice of thinking about the complexities of life, existence, reality, and how philosophers grapple with those issues is not so different from what visual artists do. When I prodded his interest in certain themes he said, after explaining his “feverish” work periods: “I think the only thing that remains

in focus is trying to articulate a certain pitch of life, a frequency or maybe a hue that I want to live at...I try to include that in the subject matter and the best is when the work becomes that thing, that pitch...that frequency.” His studio practice is, appropriately, composed of a mixture of child-like wonder and serious discipline; the experiments freely allow his ideas (however weird, spontaneous, or anti-aesthetic) to become fully conceived.

Though McNamee-Tweed struggles with putting himself fully into an identity, he certainly fits the persona of an artist whether or not he realizes, or will admit it. His struggle to identify himself is a part of his practice, almost as if the work itself is a constant testing of his will to prove to himself who he is. So when does one call oneself an artist? The adage goes that one is an artist when one’s peers call one an artist. If that is truly the case McNamee-Tweed is many things; a writer, a book-maker, a curator, a philosopher but most of all, an artist.

—CAITLIN G McCOLLOM



Conflict of Interest

Q+A with Kevin McNamee-Tweed

Rebecca Marino | April 27, 2015

Kevin McNamee-Tweed is a visual artist as well as the exhibition manager at Big Medium and all around rad dude.



Rebecca Marino: You used to be a writer. Can you talk a little bit about what you used to write, why/how you transitioned to visual art, and how that influences your work now?

Kevin McNamee-Tweed: I started writing in art school. I guess I was rebelling but I had honestly lost sight of how to produce visual work and after a few incarnations of absurd “installations” and quote unquote conceptual work I turned to writing and found that it gave me much needed limitations and also allowed me within the strict medium of Writing to do anything at all (or say I was doing anything at all). Some of what I produced in the period starting at the end of my time in college in New York and the 3 or 5 years that followed was a result of kind of wanting to do art but not wanting to actually do it (like paint, perform, make, etc.) and some of it, more and more over time, was genuinely about trying to express myself via the tradition of writing words down on paper or on computer. By the time I moved to

Austin and slowly stumbled back to visual art, I’d been rather lazily pooling my creative efforts to produce readable fiction as well as experimentations of some worth, both with minimal success. I rediscovered my huge, huge love for making marks on stuff around my second year in Austin and eventually began combining the things I liked about my drawing with what I could tolerate of my writing and the result is something I’m still kicking around now.

RM: As an artist, you have several pseudonyms/identities you use. Can you name some consistent ones and how they function within or around the work?



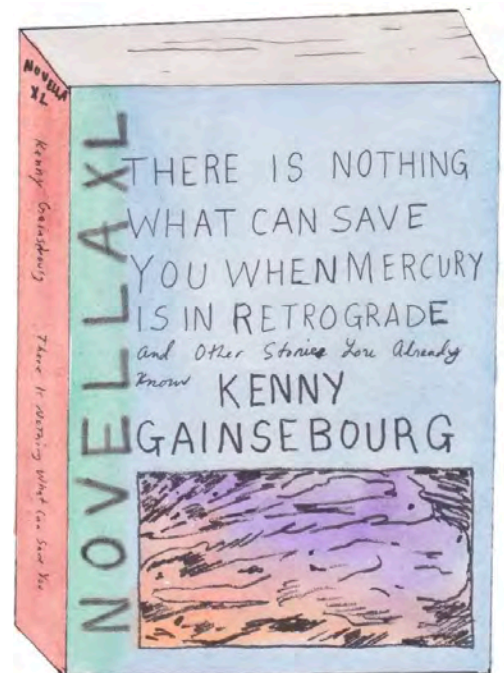
Conflict of Interest

KMT: A lot of people know me as Cotton and I use it for like internet accounts and stuff. It started back in college when I found out that my parents had considered very briefly naming me Cotton. It was ultimately discarded because it would have meant that I'd have had two fabrics in my name. I adopted it for the use of deflecting credit for writing/art of dubious quality, but quickly came to like it and identify with it even. There are still lots of people that know me as Cotton or choose to call me Cotton even though they know my other name.

I've used tons of pen names when writing short stories and non-fiction that I'd on occasion release into the world by one means or another. None of those stuck. There are some names that have come and gone in my work in the last few years. Karl is one. *Karl's Korner* was the name of a little exhibit I did, showing mostly fake flyers along with some more straight-forward artwork, zines, bits of current work. Karl has been a nice stand-in for myself that I do feel affection for but don't feel any need to defend. Other names include Terry Turdson, Edgy Susan, Keven B., and most recently I've been feeling Jeff coming on really strong. I've started recording myself on my phone saying "Hey, I'm Jeff, My name's Jeff..." and then I just start listing things Jeff likes, his interests, you know. I've got fifteen of these in Voice Memos. Listening back to them I laugh out loud hysterically for a second and then curdle with disgust.

RM: You are incredibly prolific, and coincidentally, you're also a curator. What is the editing process like for you?

KMT: Most of my shows are presentations of pretty huge bodies of work that I don't edit much. If I make something and I think it's unsuccessful or it sucks, I'll throw it immediately in the 'maybe' pile and keep it around to languish until maybe it becomes good. Things don't really make it out of that pile unless they get drastically transformed. When it comes to presenting these big bodies of work in an exhibit I usually look to the creative process for clues on how to organize it. I like to let rigid, sweeping systems define the order, such as chronological or alphabetical order or linear narrative, rather than imposing a thought process that is detached from the creative mania. When no system is abundantly apparent, I just sit with the work in the space and try things out endlessly until something is acceptable.





Conflict of Interest

My work as a curator at Big Medium has given me a chance to be close to and work with a lot of artists and I learn from every one of them. I approach art first and foremost as an artist, that is, I look at it to see how it can instruct my work. The process of making things is always rewarding in so many ways. I'm so grateful that I have this relationship with it. I know that sounds corny but really I don't know what I would do or be if I didn't have things I make to reflect back at me pieces of my experience as a person that is myself.

RM: While a lot of the work you make is super funny, a lot of it is super sad, some of it both, really. Do you feel like you're usually coming from a place of cynicism or vulnerability, or maybe a pretty good mixture of both? Do you feel like living in Austin has tipped that in any sort of direction?

KMT: I don't know. When I make stuff I'm usually trying to trick existence into letting me exist in a different way for a while. The things I create are the proof of that or the documentation, I guess. I don't necessarily see a thing more conclusively after making art about it but the process of making the work about it allows me to make peace with it, sometimes dupe it, sometimes submit to it, sometimes just try it on and walk around in it. As a viewer of my own work I'm often having the same questions other viewers have, like Why, What, How, and again Why. But I don't have a lot of uneasiness over not getting answers.

One thing about the way Austin has influenced my movement along the cynicism/vulnerability spectrum is I've come to resent singularly positive ideologies, lifestyle brands, you know. Austin really nurtures positive attitudes and lifestyles because it's so beautiful and easy going, but it gets just disgusting at times.

RM: What do you listen to when you're working in your studio?

KMT: I think I'm at my most productive when I have an album that I can listen over and over to. It keeps the vibe the same, which can be helpful. It's not always you have that trusty record that can keep you entranced and buoyant for whole afternoons. Lately in the studio I've been listening to Furry Lewis, Satyajit Ray film scores, Arthur Russell, Harold Budd, William Tyler, lots of country always, and Mississippi Records compilations and mixtapes are the best things ever, a real treasure, and I'm always finding new ones I like and returning to old loves.

RM: If you were a book, what book would you be (because you're actually on the dating game)?

KMT: Plants In Space



Conflict of Interest

RM: I really like the little handmade books you make, but I know you're having a book of your book covers printed—when does that come out and how can I buy one?

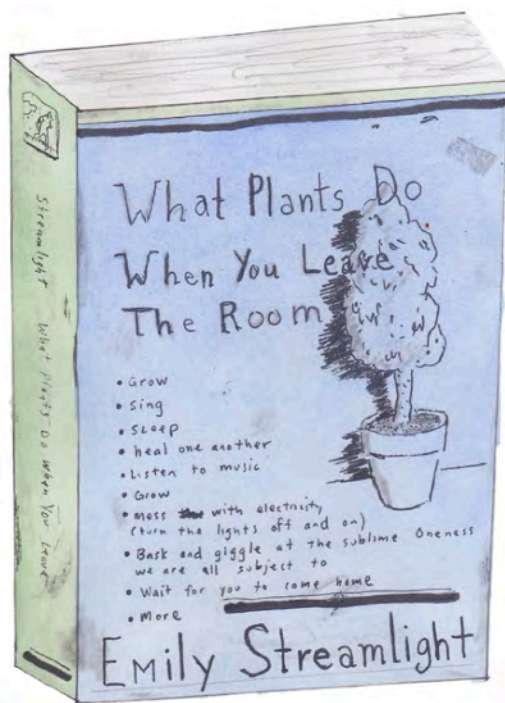
KMT: I love books. I've done a few zines and things but I didn't really enjoy the process of making them so the handmade, one-off books were great, immediately gratifying, although by the same token it was pretty stressful to get no do-overs. They're all done with Sumi ink on paper I can't afford. I like them too, thanks.

I have a book of my book drawings coming out soon which is being produced by Farewell Books, Raw Paw, and Molasses Books. I think it'll be out in June. It will be available in stores but you can email me or any of the other folks involved to join the pre-order list. It's very exciting and I'm lucky to work with such good, smart people on it.



NEW MYSTERIES. NEW DAY. FRESH DOUGHNUTS: AN INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN MCNAMEE-TWEED

WRITTEN & CURATED BY LILLY BALL
DECEMBER 16, 2014



It's an ambitious undertaking when you try to explain to people the work of Kevin McNamee-Tweed. You find yourself whipping out your laptop or your phone so they can see what you're talking about. A range of emotions will register in their face like the mechanizations of a clock—the introspective glare switches to a smirk that finally evolves into an outright guffaw—and somehow he or she and you will feel suddenly connected. There is a certain awareness and sensitivity to people and nature (commonly lost in the workaday shuffle) that is rediscovered in McNamee-Tweed's art. A vulnerability to the cosmos—an acceptance to it's faults and shortcomings wherein the only response is an imperceptible side-glance followed by a chuckle.

In your Books project, you play with societal clichés, turning self-help books into frank expressions of somewhat common existential crises. What did you hope to impart onto your viewers during the exhibition?

I wanted two things. First, I wanted the fabricated bookstore vibes to be palpable and really nice but still ultimately surrender to art installation vibes. And then secondly, and more importantly to me, I wanted people to just engage with the drawings and read every single last one and feel a whole lot. I like when people laugh at my shows, but it's also important to me that some people are sometimes feeling very serious and suddenly pondering a tender memory.



It seems that human cliché (artistically, developmentally, etc.) both interests and repulse you. Tell me about cliché.

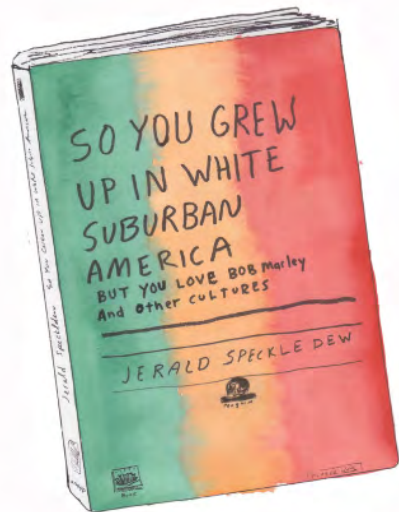
You have to feel bad for clichés, because they were just doing their job; being truthful, beautiful, melancholy, whatever, and then like some paid performer had to repeat itself so many times that they couldn't resonate with what they were being beautiful about or truthful about or tender about anymore, and the technique, the delivery takes over and it becomes disjointed from the original subject.

Your work is hilarious. What influences you?

I don't know. Probably not too many hilarious things really. More like Southernness, Nature (like outside trees, plants, creeks, birds, etc.), music about love or death, stupidity, mastery, other people's misery.

When you have an exhibition and there are people looking at your work and sniffing their own farts, trying to interpret your stuff, where can we find you and what are you thinking?

I'm pretending to look for something I lost. I don't really drink very often, but I always do at openings.



“YOU HAVE TO FEEL BAD FOR CLICHÉS, BECAUSE THEY WERE JUST DOING THEIR JOB.”

Your work seems to be satirizing how serious people in the art world take themselves. Is your work impervious to criticism?

I try to control the context that I present my work so that it doesn't feel much like a straightforward art exhibit. If I had to stand behind work that was just a visual statement, I would feel much more anxious. In the next year I'll be showing some work that is more purely visual, so it will be a challenge to try and strike the right pitch and tone. I doubt that any show of mine will lack silliness but at the same time I am down to sort of temporarily be a split personality publicly in that I sometimes show hugely hyper contextualized installations, but then also sometimes exhibit pared-back presentations of explorations of visual language that I did.

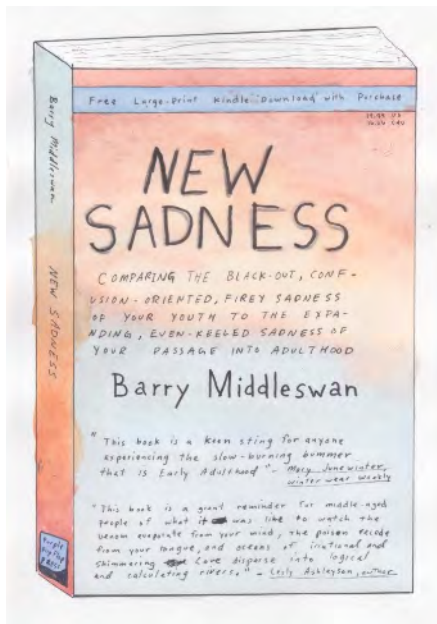


What artists do you look up to?

Hokusai kills me. Saul Steinberg's work is still important to me because of how successfully it communicates. There are lots of artists I romanticize who don't directly influence my work but influence my lifestyle. Currently though, I really admire the work of Ethan Cook who makes what I see as sort of absurdly beautiful gestures of restraint, monuments almost. I could never do that. And my oldest of best friends in the world, Gus Thompson, makes excruciatingly relevant and exquisite visual work.

Your work Flyers seems like an interactive spin-off of the Books project. What sort of responses are you getting? What are you saying with your new project?

I actually was making flyers before I started making the books. I discovered Kenneth Goldsmith's flyer collection when I was in college and loved it so much and have thought about it ever since. In the Books exhibitions in Austin and Philly I had walls of community bulletins like you might see at a used bookstore, and doing that sort of legitimized them for me. A lot of people have been into them and I price them very low so people actually quite often buy the flyers. I like to imagine them on people's walls in their homes existing as legitimate, possibly framed artwork. I may do a show of all flyers, but at the very least I expect them to accompany any show I do in the foreseeable future.



Your earlier drawings portray naked cavemen weaving through overgrown brush literally towards the word "meaningless," existential meteors crash-landing into a gray human existence, a pair of feet walking up a staircase in which each step alternates between the word "void" and "Infinity." What gets you up in the morning?

I like sadness, meaninglessness, etc., but I also like happiness, meaningfulness, etc. I'm definitely interested in how people relate to their own sadness, sense of meaninglessness, etc., because I value it a lot and I like to try out articulations of those relationships I imagine. The caveman/early human drawings were no doubt residue from my earlier Rocks project. Depicting the dawn of humanity is very appealing and I've made a lot of work about it.

Christopher Guest once said, "The funniest comedians are the ones who seem most miserable." Do you crack yourself up on a daily basis?

Bi-weekly.



Do you have future projects or exhibitions that we should know about?

The biggest thing currently is the publication of the book of all the book drawings. It's being done by really amazing people: Farewell Books (Austin), Molasses Books (Brooklyn), and Raw Paw (Austin). It should be out in January. Other than that, I am working towards several exhibitions in the next twelve months in North Carolina, New York, Berlin, and Austin.

Who should we interview next?

Henry (real name Matt) Winn. He runs Molasses Books in Brooklyn, which is a bookstore and is now beginning to publish books, the first of which just came out this month. It's a book of fiction by Hen Win. He'll charm you.

What are you going to do after this interview?

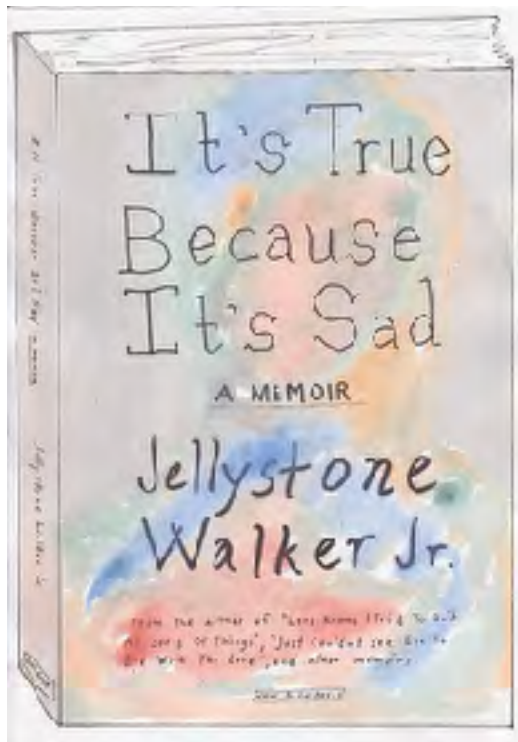
Watch a soccer game that I already know the score of.

Laugh Until You Cry with These Fake Book Covers

By [Kathryn Potraz](#)

December 9, 2014

In an era when Twitter user [@sosadtoday](#) has 159k followers, it makes perfect sense that Texas artist [Kevin McNamee-Tweed's faux books](#) strike a chord. The imperfect covers, which are painted messily with watercolors, feature scribbled-out typos, and offer questionable advice, are a sharply funny look at the sometimes depressing state of the 21st century.



Complete with reviews, price stickers, publishing imprints and bar codes, the book covers poke fun at writers and readers who take their literature too seriously. A synopsis for one book reads, “Kicked out of art school, frightened of suburbia, seduced by filth and angst... a strong female protagonist conquers her mild and mainstream demons to become super fucking edgy and very urban...” McNamee-Tweed also criticizes cultural appropriation on a green, yellow and red cover: *So You Grew Up In White Suburban America But You Love [Bob Marley](#) And Other Cultures*.

Many of the titles are simply funny non sequiturs: *Is That A Banana In Your Pocket Or Did You Just Eat Asparagus For Dinner? And Other Classic American Humor*.

There are many false, compound last names (Sturgil Commontree is a repeat offender here) but also real companies re-appropriated for McNamee-Tweed's bizarre universe. There's an NPR book that comes with a pair of “tortoise shell glasses FREE” and advertises that you can “get the app the reads all the stories aloud for YOU,” defeating the purpose of an NPR book. There's also a faux Moleskine, lambasting the cost of their journals: “Moi!skin: super expensive cuz no one's written in it yet!” with a price sticker suggesting \$42.66.

At first glance, the book *Omaha* looks joke-less, featuring the title over a plain landscape ... but check the back cover for reviews that read, “Didn't read it. Haven't read a book of fiction in years... But I like this one because if I'm not mistaken it weighs the exact same as a young male turtle dove.”

The project can come across as cynical, but there are moments of real emotion: the bare covers for *Yesterday Is Falling All Over Itself Today* and *Heart Too Soft to Break* are a few. It's this simplicity and honesty that makes these covers more than just a jab at publishing.

It's Nice That

Self-help, poo and existential questions: Kevin McNamee-Tweed's Books

Words by [Emily Gosling](#), Thursday 20 November 2014



Kevin McNamee-Tweed by name, twee by nature, I'd assumed, casting an eye over these sweetly, naively sketched wee pictures of books. Then I read the titles. One contained the word "shart." Another proclaims, "It's Only Your Fault: How to Help Yourself", while a more philosophical tome proffers the question "who is....BIRD HUMAN?"

In short, they're wonderful titles, which wouldn't surprise us if they did actually exist in some hidden corner of a trust library shelf in a doctor's surgery or anarchist-leaning cakeshop.

However, the book covers are all as entirely fictional as the contents they promise, lovingly drawn by Texas-based artist Kevin McNamee-Tweed. Each of the images is created with watercolour, gouache, and ink on paper to the size of an actual book.

In a piece about a show of the works in Texas, the [St Claire Review](#) editor Stephanie Bursese surmised that the show looked to answer the questions: "Am I really going to read all of these? How are these peering into the depths of my soul and saying exactly what's in my heart of hearts? Why am I weeping? Does anyone have a tissue? Do you think anyone saw me weeping? Do you think I'll be able to communicate better with Gary if I read "You Want Me To What? Being Open With Your Super Square Sexual Partner"?"

We're not sure, but perhaps a skim through *New Sadness: Comparing the black-out, confusion-oriented, fiery sadness of your youth to the expanding, even-keeled sadness of your passage into adulthood* might bring us a little closer to the answer.

