



## BUILDING DAYS

BY MATTHEW BENINGTON

OPEN: 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH – 21<sup>ST</sup> APRIL, 11AM – 4PM FRI – SAT OR BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

### ***Not to be a man, to be the projection of another man's dream, what a feeling of humiliation, of vertigo!* - Jorge Luis Borges, *The Circular Ruins*, 1949**

In a broad sense, the works in *Building Days* are concerned with the pressures exerted on an individual by personal and familial histories. These are the histories most familiar, which reside in formative memories and manifest as attitudes passed down wordlessly from one generation to the next. Motifs of childhood, the folly and the faded photograph are evident in the artist's past work, which often directly involves his and his family's history.

The photosensitive cyanotypes are a retelling of a sensitive incident in the artist's life, an exposure both literal and metaphorical. Histories can be troubling, and in a context of suppression, of things swept under the carpet, to recount a memory is a process of rebuilding and repair. The sensitivity of the cyanotype medium, a material that is susceptible to light, suggests an acknowledgement of sensitivity as a state of being, one that is actively discouraged under patriarchy. Words printed by the sun with sans-serif frankness disguise the vulnerability of the artist in sharing something personal. If the general circumstances of the story remain oblique to the viewer, the associated sentiments evince an intimate conflict, suggesting that perhaps the work serves as a placeholder for a conversation long overdue.

As children we are conduits for the legacies of our predecessors. As predecessors we yearn to make meaning that endures when we are gone. Psychoanalysis refers to this behaviour as 'generativity' - a concern for future generations. The same term is used to describe a concept in technology whereby digital systems evolve and deviate from their origin. These concepts furnish us with an apt metaphor. With the copperplate etching the artist is, in a way, participating in a tradition of autobiography, though the accumulation of arbitrary marks on resist-primed metal is the opposite kind of representation to the portrait of his great grandfather, which is reminiscent of that icon of romanticism, Caspar David Friedrich's 'Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog'. Here the romance of the patriarchal figure is shirked by a superimposed image of a cemetery monument undergoing repairs.

To say that the past is a burden for the individual to be liberated from is a simplification. Storytelling is a practice employed to make sense of the past, a practice that is crucial in positioning ourselves within greater narratives but that is also diffuse with problematic conventions. The works in *Building Days* do not pretend to offer the past as raw material but as material heavy-laden with hereditary ideals. How can the sharing of personal histories be used not only in strategies for preservation, but for renewal and rehabilitation - to agitate the muddy waters of toxic masculinity in the hopes that they clear long enough to hold an honest conversation?



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### List of works

*Newbridge is a residential electoral Ward on the Western edge of Bath.*  
Seven 2.4 x 1.5 meter cyanotypes, somerset 400gsm paper.

*Bug head drawing*  
Acrylic screenprinted 1/6, Somerset 300gsm paper. 110 x 70cm

*Unstable monument.*  
Lustre C-Type print on dibond aluminium, 62 x 80cm

*Incidental marks 20/01/2014 – 29/03/2018*  
Copper sheet, bitumen and beeswax.