

New York Exhibition

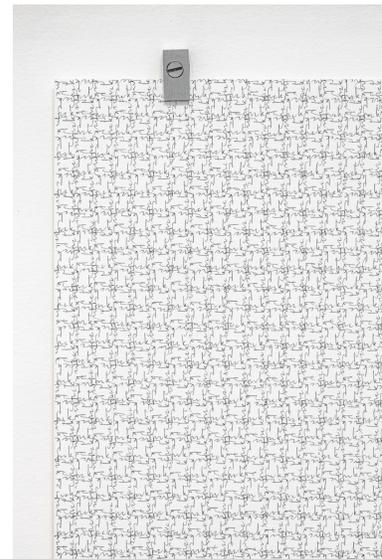
Ken Nicol

CHECKING BOXES

January 13 – February 25, 2023

Arsenal Contemporary Art New York is happy to present a solo exhibition of Toronto-based artist Ken Nicol in collaboration with Olga Korper Gallery. The exhibition is accompanied by a text written by the Canadian novelist and short story writer Derek McCormack.

Checking Boxes, Ken Nicol's show at Arsenal Contemporary Art NY, is about boxes. Ken loves boxes. His studio contains almost a million of them, or more than a million. I haven't counted them. He probably has. He's a counter. He counts. If I asked him, he'd probably have a number at hand: 1,929,684, or 678,555. This count would have to include the studio itself, two boxy rooms in a former factory in Toronto: the windows feature steel muntins that gird the glass, so that the sky outside seems to be gridded. This count must include the boxes built up around him: cardboard boxes that came from eBay sellers, pasteboard boxes of paper or pens, plastic bins with nails and nuts, toolboxes. This count must also include the art he's built from boxes. In "Counting Squares," he's numbered each square in a Moleskine notebook of squared paper: there are 242,926 in total. In "Checking Boxes," he's checked off every box in various sheets of vintage graph paper: a letter-size sheet has 28,000 boxes; a ledger sheet has 53,000; another ledger sheet has boxes that are way too small to write numbers in—what was it meant to record? These boxes aren't too small for checkmarks: he's checked them, too. I wouldn't say that this checking is compulsive: I'd say that it's the boxes, squares and graphs that are compulsive—they keep coming! In "Homage to the Fuckin' Square," Albers-esque squares are actually the word "fuck" written in a minute script many tens of thousands of times. This isn't swearing, it's swarming: these fucked-up squares are capable of expanding exponentially, squares squaring, cubes cubing, squares fucking squares, cubes fucking cubes. This is what I think: before boxes can bury him, he checks them, checks as in contains and controls. There's a box constructed from paper cut from a Moleskine journal. There's a box in the box; there's a box in



Ken Nicol, *completely fucked 42,952 four colour* (2022), Ink on paper, 11 x 8 1/2 in.

that box; there's a box in that box. There are ninety-six boxes in all, the smallest only one-eighth of an inch across—what can you fit in a box that small? The idea of a box. Is that the correct answer? Check.

- Derek McCormack

Information :

+1 212 658 0017

info.ny@arsenalcontemporary.com

www.arsenalcontemporary.com