

## ***But nobody showed up***

Group Exhibition

Opening reception: Thursday, November 21<sup>st</sup> (6-8pm)

November 21, 2019 – January 11, 2020

Curation and text by Pujan Karambeigi

In *Proxies – Essays Near Knowing*, Brian Blanchfield writes: “The mirror is not a depth *into* which to view the reflection of one's composed façade, but, rather a surface *on* which to manifest what comes from within.” The quote is from “On Containment,” one of the twenty-four chronologically ordered essays that starts with an anecdote about how his face was partially bitten away by a dog when he was a child, bleeding all-over the backseat while his parents were driving him to the hospital: “*What does it look inside me?* I could hardly contain myself.” It's a text about the fear to disintegrate, to lose control over one's interiority, to drop one's most intimate secret, and, as he mentions only in a side-note, about his coming out.

If his essay is about the moment of “extroversion,” of turning inside-out, Blanchfield is doing a strange job at it. While he is adamant to use himself and nothing but himself as reference or source material, why this feeling that the writing is not about himself? Why don't his disclosures result in moments of identification so typical of this genre dubbed autofiction? Why is it that Blanchfield is barely recognizable through this mirror he is silvering by way of writing? Does he betray identity? Is this what he means by “disinhibited autobiography?” (88)

“On Containment”, and in a way the book, is about access to the self and its porous interiority. Without resorting to simply denying it, Blanchfield moves one step beyond the trope of masquerade/failure/inability that this ghost of Postmodernism has kept ‘reiterating’ with its *amour fou* for the closed-circuit looking glass. “Proprioception” makes the move, an idea Blanchfield picks up from Charles Olson, one of the stepfathers of Postmodern poetry, who in turn had appropriated it half a century after it was first coined by the English neurophysiologist Charles Scott Sherrington in order to redirect the verse away from identification towards projection. Proprioception is a strange idea. It means both to grasp one's position in space as well as to appreciate the relationships unfolding within oneself. One word to denote the entire landscape of selfhood.

Claiming this to be a realism of the self is misleading. Blanchfield doesn't go down the much-tested route of confession, selfhood as the performance of 'shame, error and guilt' leading to catharsis or innocence. His revelations are not about revealing himself but about moving somewhere else (an idea/concept/structure/activity, whatever sounds least platonic to you). What he does is to realize the holy trinity of race, class, and gender not as abstract schema but as embedded power relations. The self is an environment, and Blanchfield formulates how to struggle with how it emerges and where to demarcate the porous divisions of inside and outside. And it is in the midst of this struggle for articulation that “there are a number of opportunities, precisely when one is petrified, to break the glass.”

### *Addendum by the gallery:*

That being said, Kai Matsumiya presents '*But nobody showed up*', a group exhibition featuring eight artists from wide-ranging backgrounds, points of focus and media in their practices. Their collective works in this exhibition speak to unique notions of representation, be that of the artists themselves or of others, distinctive and collective alike.

**Georgian Badal** (b. 1981, Iran); **Alice Creischer** (b.1960, Germany); **Robert Hawkins** (b. 1951, USA); **Benjamin Hirte** (b. 1980, Germany); **Tessa Hughes-Freeland** (b. 1958, UK); **Elliott Jamal Robbins** (b. 1988, USA); **Robert Sandler** (b. 1991, USA); **Lise Soskolne** (b. 1971, Canada).

Kai Matsumiya is located at 153 1/2 Stanton Street between Clinton and Suffolk Streets. The closest trains are the F (2nd Ave) and the J/M/Z (Essex/Delancey); the closest wheelchair accessible stop is the 4/6 (Bleecker/Lafayette). The entry is supported by a provisional wheelchair ramp upon request and the gallery is barrier-free throughout. Presently, the gallery cannot offer a public or wheelchair-accessible bathroom. Service animals are welcome.