

Piper Keys Exhibitions

Stuart Middleton *Sad Sketches*

6th December to 18th January
Opening view: Friday 5th December, 6 to 9pm

For *Sad Sketches*, Stuart Middleton shows new work comprising four bar tables supported by human forms.

Inside the adapted gallery space we meet a group of disorientated bodies. Each figure consists of a set of papier-mâché legs that seem to stagger under a circular top. Robustly modelled with painted detail, their waists are fixed to, and partially hidden by, white laminate disks. These are tables taking on human form, following the literal sense of 'table legs', or people becoming part of the furniture.

The intersecting tabletops could suggest two psychological spaces. Above there is a presentable, wipe clean surface, while below there is a murky space of illicit transactions. We might imagine, under a bar table, the gargling loose-change talk between a collapsed drunk and someone's tired-faced shoes. In its simplest form the table functions here as metaphor for a structure that presents some things while obscuring others.

Each pair of legs is graphically depicted: bits of people, such as bruised knees and pale shins, tell their story. Unable to censor themselves, body parts talk of life's drudgery. Caught in a symbiotic rigour mortis of repression and support, gravity squashes down, legs thrust up and somewhere in-between exchange takes place. Here composition has been generated by the bodily contortions, the shakes, the palsies of alcoholic stupor. As matter becomes animated the limbs seem to act independently.

Sad Sketches borrows its title from a series of drawings made by serial killer Dennis Nilsen whilst in prison in the early 1980s. Nilsen drew and annotated scenes of murder and dismemberment from memory as a way of stimulating remorse for his victims. Middleton's paper and paste bodies, often paired up, talk of a desperate kind of contact between persons. Comically proceeding without heads or hearts, they succumb to forces that act upon them and the urges that consume them.

<http://www.piperkeys.com/sadsketches.html>

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Gallery opening hours 12noon to 6pm, Friday to Sunday

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