

Michael Dean: Government

12 April – 17 June 2012

Galleries 1, 2 and 3

Michael Dean's sculptures are either the perfect size to be carried or are scaled to their surrounding architecture. Made from cast concrete, their surfaces are veined and ridged, offering invitations to be touched. Tactility is an essential sculptural quality for Dean - he wishes us 'first to touch with the eyes, and then allow ourselves to touch with the hand'.

Government transforms the Institute's galleries. The concrete floor is covered with a thick wool, wall-to-wall carpet, changing the sound, feel and smell of the spaces. Instead of standing, the Institute's Information Assistants sit on the floor. The door handles to the gallery have been recast as forearm-sized sculptures, titled 'yes (working title)' and 'no (working title)'. Single, precise words are always the starting point for Dean, his sculptures spelling out their own titles in an abstracted typography. These flat, grey, concrete bodies leave themselves no choice but to be handled, their patina changing as the raw, unsealed surfaces pick up the traces of each person's touch.

Government is a term referring to the regulation of human conduct. Dean is interested in how the impersonal nature of government rapidly becomes personal when it rubs against everyday experience. Three large concrete sculptures, cast on site at the Institute, copy, enlarge and reduce the architecture in turn. Their titles, 'education (working title)', 'health (working title)' and 'home (working title)', point to the moments when the touch of government is felt most palpably. Each is propped against the wall, too large to leave the Institute intact. Just visible beyond 'home (working title)' is a room illuminated by a flickering television screen showing Dean's film 'tendance (working title)', a study of light, space and volume.

Sitting on the floor are three spherical concrete sculptures - two can be found resting on the carpet, and one propped on a paperback book. A second book is placed just at the foot of 'health (working title)'. These paperbacks repeat a single page of writing the artist has developed for *Government*. Writing is an essential part of Dean's work,

with his sculptures generated and accompanied by intimate, observational texts exploring the object qualities of words. Visitors are invited to tear out a page at will, with these diminishing books replenished as soon as the last leaf is removed. Like government papers, these pages are subjective policies, documents written with a specific thought in mind that, once distributed, becomes subject to interpretation by others. Throughout the day Dean's working notes are read aloud by Institute staff, the activity taking place whether anyone is present or not. Placing the spoken word in space is, for Dean, as much a sculpture as is any object.

Michael Dean (b. Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1977) studied at Goldsmiths College between 1998 and 2001. His work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions across Europe, including at Kunsthalle Freiburg in Germany, the Zabłudowicz Collection in London, Nomas Foundation in Rome, MAK in Vienna and KIM? Contemporary Art Centre in Riga.

Michael Dean: Government is accompanied by a limited edition book, *Selected Writings*, on sale in our bookshop at the special exhibition price of £15. Co-published by the Henry Moore Foundation and Mousse Publishing, it features essays by Lisa Le Feuvre, Head of Sculpture Studies, and Pavel S. Pyś, Exhibitions and Displays Curator.