

'**NOT NOT**', the title Andrew Webb has chosen for this the latest exhibition of his work in the gallery, is a tautology - a reiteration - as well as a contradiction, both of Wittgenstein's 'truth conditions' rolled into one. Conceptually speaking, then, there is hardly a hairs breadth between these two identical signs: no space left for interpretation.

The title functions as an inward-folding mirror-space rendering meaning fugitive and bringing us face-to-face with the possibility of the death of language. It does not, in this regard, represent a common theme linking the works in the exhibition, more a location or a site, a nominal, studiously silent 'other' place from which to view them, beyond the chattering world of routine meaning.

Amongst the copious notes made by the artist he points to the algebraic inversion... 'Two Negatives = A Positive'... as an important way of understanding 'NOT NOT'. Accordingly, the title must be construed as an indicator of the 'Isness' of the work of art and of works of art in general. A confirmation but also an affirmation of their continued existence as distinct from all other categories of things.

Webb describes himself, NOT as a painter and NOT as a sculptor, but as an object -maker. This exhibition then has very few images in it. And while he is clearly fascinated by language - the show is littered with visual-verbal puns - for the most part he contrives to turn even titular words into things by calling them NOTICES.

It was Sigmund Freud who first suggested that the pun functions as a void in the fabric of language. Like a stutter in vocalisation, it exists as a dizzying moment in which the habit of sense-making is suddenly put to flight. Webb uses this momentary emptying out of sense, just as he uses tautology and contradiction, as another form of 'closure', another way of depriving his objects of any discursive use value. Indeed, he frequently speaks of the necessity of placing things 'beyond use' and in this he is speaking, not simply of utilitarian function but also of their 'usefulness' to argument.

In this respect, these works are NOT intended to be exemplars of anything other than the category of art itself; NOT illustrative of any theory, fashionable school of thought or human predicament, but to be quite simply what they are, works of art.

It is, of course, both a high irony and a fanciful conceit to seem to hold to the belief that the world of art and its attendant values exists absolutely independent of the quotidian; that works of art can in very truth open up the way to heaven. But in Webb's case there is real moral force behind his so doing. He firmly believes that art should be difficult; both to make and - beyond the pleasure they must give to the eye - to comprehend or to seize upon by the mind.

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