

# Cecilia Hillstrom Gallery:

Clay Ketter. "...out of my hands."

The title of this exhibition suggests that the works created for the exhibition have come into being without the artist's conscious decisions and intentions. But it also states that they do come from his hands, which may seem to be a paradox. If not conscious, maybe unconscious, or subconscious? Are we entering a dream world? It sounds like surrealism and it does not sound like the Clay Ketter I know.

Clay Ketter is known for his formal and conceptual rigour. He has explained that he structures his work in three phases, each demanding a specific set of knowledge or skills – and so he thinks of himself taking on different roles for each phase: first comes the idea for the work–this is Clay the artist. Then he plans the realization of the work–now he is the engineer. And finally, he makes the work, as the craftsman, or maker. But where do these ideas come from?

One group of works are based on the closing images in the Warner Brothers *Merrie Melodies/Looney Tunes* cartoons which Clay grew up with. The concentric circles in many colours create a kind of hypnotic, de-stabilizing optic effect, reminiscent of Marcel Duchamp's *Rotoreliefs*.

The circular shape, unstable in itself as it has no orientation, returns like a memory throughout the exhibition. Another work consists of a group of vinyl records—a remake of an early piece he made in art school (1981), made from memory, as he has no documentation of it.

He is using images and ideas that are rooted in his memories.

In another work, *1975 Resonator*, the circle appears as a drum, a bass drum used by marching bands. The name of an American middle school is written on the drum. At the push of a button, it produces a loud marching beat from within the drum—an echo, a memory from the days when Clay was a young drum major.

Can we trust our memories? Can we trust our dreams? Are they fiction or are they fact?

No more or less than our interpretations of the present, according to Clay Ketter.

Magnus af Petersens