

There is no image, no painting, no visible trait, which can express the relation that constitutes property. It is not material it is metaphysical; it is a mere conception of the mind ...

Jeremy Bentham, *Theory of Legislation*, 1802

The title of Shiraz Sadikeen's new exhibition, like all of his source material, is a readymade. *Securicraft* is a brand of home security devices that includes the small deadbolts for windows. In latin securi means both 'free from care' and 'leisure', but it also translates to 'striking tool', or more specifically, 'axe'.

Both locks and axes feature in a set of four diminutive assemblage sculptures that share their title with that of the exhibition. Each *Securicraft* comprises a partially decapitated key, sharpened to resemble the head of an axe, protruding from an even bundle of slender brown incense sticks. The improvised axe form mimics a fasces – a latin term for a bundle of wooden rods with an axe emerging from it. The fasces is an ancient roman symbol of legal authority and power, appropriated by various regimes and movements throughout history to connect them to an imagined Western Imperial heritage. It's the root of the term 'fascism', but also a symbol commonly used in imagery associated with liberal democratic societies, like the United States of America. The form's charge is tempered by its ideological ambiguity.

Sadiqueen's miniature fasces sit vertically atop two small deadbolts. The exposed mechanisms resemble two 'primitive' faces; the tip of the vertical bolt runs through a face, dark in colour, to meet the tip of a horizontal bolt (cast in silver) connected to a light face, with a silver spoon protruding from it's mouth. The handle of the spoon has been replaced with the tip of a key, that opens the lock.

The *Securicraft* sculptures are material diagrams that connect, quite literally, a symbol of sovereign power and 'necessary violence' in the pursuit of justice, to instruments designed to enforce modern day property rights, race, and inherited wealth.

In *Securicraft* nothing is neutral, though it often appears so. Seemingly benign materials including items from the domestic home – incense and teaspoons – and images from educational books, are presented in proximity to medical supplies, and dense theory about identity and self-conception. Through these contradictory objects a viewer might come to understand, or be reminded, that even most commonplace object is the product of ideology, and that violence (the kind necessary to uphold property rights) is expressed and enacted not only in the social field, but in objects, processes, and internalised, in our selves.

The paintings in *Securicraft* are all made through a simple abstracting procedure i.e. a reversal, crop, inversion or a rotation that partially dislocates the art object from it's source material.

The poster image of the show is a reproduction of the cover of the Beach Boys' 1971 album *Surf's Up*. The painting was an op-shop rendering of a bronze sculpture called *End of the Trail* that depicts a native American man slumped on his horse, driven off his ancestral land to the edge of the Pacific Ocean. A suitably bleak metaphor for the violence and suffering inflicted by the colonial schema.

The work titled *Of Identity and Diversity* is a painting of a book page from a chapter of the same name by 17th Century English philosopher and medical researcher John Locke, smeared with single tab of bone wax, typically used in surgical procedures and traumas, to staunch bleeding from the bone. As you exit the gallery, you might meet Locke's steely gaze in a cropped black and white portrait. Commonly referred to as the 'Father of Liberalism' and famous for his defence of private property, Locke acts as a kind of mascot for the exhibition.

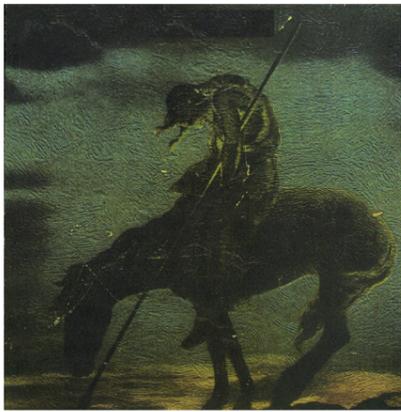
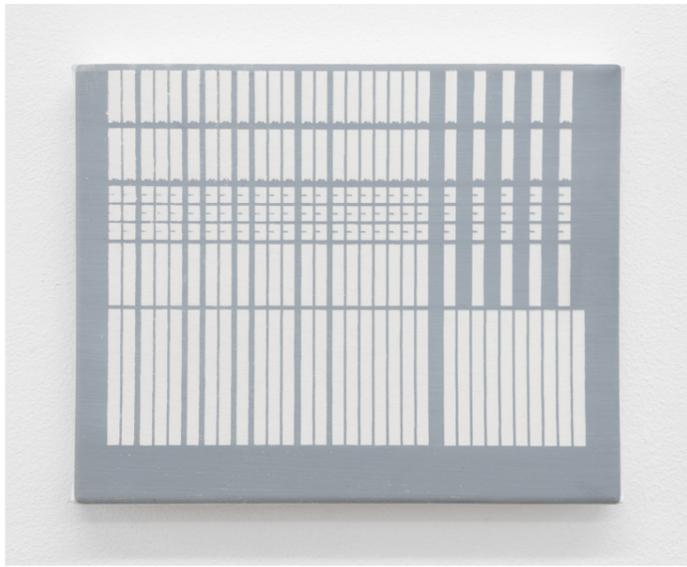
These are small, adequately made paintings that express an acerbic awareness of art's status as commodity and an ambivalence around the art-historical and critical discourses through which works of art are interpreted and valued.

Consider the geometric austerity of a small grey and white painting titled *Asset Form*. The grid is the skeleton of the Statement of Liabilities and Assets form issued by the Inland Revenue Department, stripped of text and colour and rotated 90 degrees into landscape format. The original function is to report on one's financial position, including an asset class for works of art. *Asset Form* interrogates the systems of organisation through which identities are subjected to processes of categorisation, while also self-reflexively declaring it's own status as an asset located in that very system.

While Sadiqueen's modes of abstraction purposefully provoke misrecognition, the exhibition is also riddled with clues. With context cropped away, the work asks us to attend to its form, to *how things look*. The shape, shine and hardness of the security devices, the brittle exoticism of the incense, the grid structure of *Asset Form* that echoes both a key by which we might decipher a hidden meaning, and the interior mechanism of a lock.

Taken together, and given time to unfold, these contradictory objects offer a reminder that even most commonplace object is the product of ideology, and that violence (the kind necessary to uphold property rights) is expressed and enacted not only in the social field, but in objects, processes, and internalised, in our selves.

- Sarah Hopkinson



Shiraz Sadiqueen
Asset Form, 2021
screen print and acrylic on canvas
210 x 270mm

Shiraz Sadiqueen
Securicraft, 2021
incense, window locks, brass, cast
sterling silver, silver spoon
300 x 100 x 120mm overall