

GARRY NEILL KENNEDY

AN EYE
FOR
AN EYE

23 OCTOBER 2004 - 10 APRIL 2005

MUSEUM | LONDON

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AN EYE FOR AN EYE

Garry Neill Kennedy's signature approach to painting critiques art-making itself – its materials, process and mechanics. In designing his site-specific installations, Kennedy often works according to a strict system that makes use of colour, form, line and language.

AN EYE FOR AN EYE is part of an ongoing series of installations entitled *Ethics 101*, which also includes *Tit for Tat on the Tantramar Marsh* (Owens Art Gallery, 2004) and *You Scratch My Back And I'll Scratch Yours in the Colonial Room* (Articule, 2004). Others yet to be realised are *Something for Something* and *Quid Pro Quo*. These familiar expressions connote relationships dependent upon compromise and reciprocity, suggesting the power relationships of the Museum itself – the relationship between the artist and the viewer or the institution and the visiting public. Kennedy refers to them as having the language of "let's make a deal."

In selecting the retributive phrase "an eye for an eye," he intends to underline the West's relentless and tragic incursions in the Middle East. In this sense, the work extends themes prominent in other works by Kennedy such as *The Middle East (And Beyond)*, (1991 – 2003).

In AN EYE FOR AN EYE, Kennedy has left the carpet designers at IKEA to choose his palette, thus negating, in part, his own aesthetic choices. IKEA's red, blue and yellow – a twist of the primary colours – are accompanied by grey, pink and off-white. While nodding to the aesthetic concerns of waning modernism, Kennedy's subtle sense of humour extends beyond art's institutional framework to include the larger world. Here, sixty of IKEA's "Ringum" carpets – popular decorative items – pepper the floor of the gallery space. In the context of a Museum installation, their significance and possible meanings become unclear, subsequently challenging the often uncritical acceptance of consumer products in our everyday lives.

Kennedy's belief that IKEA's highly successful marketing strategies disseminate "modernism for the masses" also refers to the utopian goals of modernism. Or if one wishes to view the carpets uncritically, Kennedy agrees, "why not see them as a collection of multi-coloured eyes?"

Kennedy's variation of the font Superstar Shadow has been used to spell out the phrase, "an eye for an eye." He has used this version of the geometric typeface for a long time, attracted by its ability to be seen both as abstract painting and text – see-sawing between abstraction and legibility.