

## ***Some Idiot Went to London***

Alek O.

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32 St. George Street  
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London  
United Kingdom

### ***The forgetful caretaker***

– Rosa Tyhurst

Sun bleached and stained hotel drapes masquerade as alluring monochromatic paintings in Alek O.'s series *Gran Hotel* (all works 2022). Stretched tightly over wooden bars the fabric proudly reveals its history yet refuses to give us the full story. We're left to fill in the gaps. For how many years were these curtains installed? What were the material conditions for them to look like this? How many people did these drapes obscure, protect, or hide? Is there a hotel somewhere with no curtains?

Displaced from the ceiling they once hung from are a stack of kitsch lamps. Their design derived from Venetian glassware, they have an ersatz glamour to them. In *Non si può tornare indietro nemmeno di un minuto* they balance on top of each other, like an illuminated Judd or mass-produced cairn. Fitted with mis-matched shades of bulbs that shift between cool blues, icy whites and warm ambers they have an uneasy dissonance. Why were the lights removed? What hangs in their place now?

There is a poetry in mistakes. From rough, unruly materials that are stained, scratched or mis-treated, a certain beauty emerges. Alek O. revels in the blemishes of the everyday, be it sun-damaged curtains, or the accidents of a forgetful caretaker. Like a kind of anthropologist, she studies human behaviours and environments, generating narratives and more questions than she started with. A site of recent analysis was Pescara, an Italian city on the Adriatic Sea. More specifically, the basement of a hotel where she sifted through abandoned, retired, and defective fragments. There, she found itchy blankets, curtains, light fixings, sun parasols and tiles all ravaged by time. Recognising the beauty in their tired and worn facades, and the memories they transmit she started to unravel them, simultaneously dwelling in the nostalgia of the objects, but also her own.

Alek O. spent her childhood summers in the seaside city of Punta del Este in Uruguay. There, she would stay for up to three months, arriving before and staying after all the other families and children who also visited. A break from the frenetic energy of her home city of Buenos Aires, days were simple and unmediated. She was free to roam and spend her days riding a bicycle in and out of the shadows of pine trees and lazing on the beach staring up at the geometric construction of a sun parasol. These memories are punctuated by a photograph of her father, wearing a souvenir t-shirt his parents brought back from a trip to London. A paradoxically gimmicky item from a place many Argentinians consider to be one of the most elegant locations on the planet. Yet, a memento, no matter what the material cost or perceived quality, can take on special meaning. When people choose to save objects, they instil a potential energy in them that over time grows exponentially. For Alek O. it is impossible to ignore.

The exhibition, named after the t-shirt, *An Idiot Went to London* is the result of Alek O.'s recent investigations. A collection of transformed objects, casualties to our environment and daily use, all pose questions about value, sentimentality, and time. Humble blankets and lost gloves are carefully deconstructed and neatly re-embroidered into colourful geometric abstract panels. The triangular

sections of stained sun parasols are playfully reconfigured to make a menagerie of animals. On first glance these hard lines and geometric shapes appear cold and inscrutable but upon a deeper look nothing is quite aligned, surfaces are dented and colours are faded. For Alek O. this is where emotion lies, and where the storytelling begins.

Hotels are transient spaces. They become a home for a day, week, or longer. Displaced from existing histories it's possible to build new ones. An exhibition space could be comparable. For a determined amount of time, the gallery is absorbed into an artists' practice and become the site of new and old memories. Shapeshifting, they fulfil the desires of the artist or curators' whims. In Alek O.'s hands it becomes an ode to long summer days, dusty nights, mosquito bites and sickly-sweet drinks. A space where the most forgetful of caretakers might want to stay a little longer.