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For immediate release:

Kevin Tobin: *All by Myself*

February 20–April 18, 2021

Opening Saturday February 20, 4–8pm

Are they sepulchurs? Are they doors? Are they bats? Are they self-portraits? Are they apotropaic talismans, to ward off despots? Do they glow? Does their marsupial shine brighten your mood or dampen it? Can you bite their surfaces? Do you wish to be bitten? Is your mouth protected from invaders? Do you live by yourself? Will you marry me? Where is my twin? I lost him or her or them in the shopping mall. We were browsing in the lab-equipment aisle. Is Clorox shelved near the Philip Guston books? Why do I hide my Judy Garland *Alone* album? I starred in *Carmen* at the climax of puberty. I threw my "Habanera" rose, like a bride's garter, into the audience. I leaked

solitude, like dribble out a slack mouth, a "hag-born" (quoth Shakespeare) daysleeper, fuschia-faced. I met Kev when he was very young. He wore a complicated shirt, with at least two layers, asymmetrical. The only time I saw a bat upclose was when I removed the air conditioner from a bedroom window and discovered a sleeping vampire nestled between the windowsill and the appliance's bottom. Underneath the top layer of Kev's paintings, hieroglyphic inscriptions, like spit-out bones, vibrate. I'm staring into the painting's pond to see bodies buried beneath its algae scrim. Perhaps Kev's words, what Kev might tell you in his dreams, are hidden behind the painting's uppermost skin. Kev and I had several long conversations about the painter Miriam Cahn; we support, Kev and I, a culture of blur, of figures subjected to the healing agency of distortion and miasma. We may not wish to see or say things clearly. In quarantine we are sometimes lonely but often entranced by pigment sticks—an efficacious way of smearing color boldly *in medias res* onto the rising action. Willem de Kooning as a young man looked like a friend of a young Marlon Brando. There is almost no connection, in the scrupulous scholar's mind, between the painter and the painting; the painting has its own biography, immune to the insinuations—the slander—of the painter's own story. Isn't that a bat's prerogative—to be vaccinated against biography? To be free from the implicating terror of psychoanalytic cause-and-effect, teleology, aetiology? Wrong. Psychoanalysis—Kev knows and feels this fact, I suspect—goes backward, a reverse logic. Tomorrow causes today. Kev Tobin causes Willem de Kooning. Tomorrow's pulsar causes yesterday's primal scene. We don't dwell in conspiracy theories. We believe in science. Imagine how deplorable the world has become, that we need to defend science's right to know, to investigate, to assert. These paintings, Kev's first solo show, have a say in making this world less deplorable, for those viewers fortunate enough to stumble upon these doors, these portraits, these emblems, aglow with the artist's promise and

lubov.nyc
info@lubov.nyc

(347) 496-5833

5 E Broadway, #402
New York, NY 10038

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with his generous, if solitary, wish to make your inner surfaces (your dreams, your mucous membranes, your emergencies) shine with the same numinous intensity as these *demonstrations*, which means monster and also means love, a bat's wing loving its other wing, the pigment stick loving the layer of paint it lands upon with a familial pressure, a sibling weight. The extinction of species and the application of paint may have nothing to do with each other but I believe that Kev's paintings are brooding about extinction and the daily movement against it, the labor, slow and principled, of taking a stand against unnecessary destruction. The art we make knows about the catastrophes we only half-acknowledge in our waking language. The virtue of Kev's impeccable paintings is that they traffic almost entirely in the pulsations we are afraid to acknowledge.

—Wayne Koestenbaum, February 2021.

Kevin Tobin (b. 1989, Canada) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He received a BFA from the College for Creative Studies in Detroit, MI in 2011. *All By Myself* is his first solo exhibition in New York City.

For any inquiries, please contact Francisco Correa Cordero at francisco@lubov.nyc

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