

Adina Glickstein, *Brendan Earley*, Artforum, April 2019

# ARTFORUM



**Brendan Earley, *The Runner*, 2018,** aluminum wire, cast aluminum, pen on cotton, dimensions variable.

## LONDON

Brendan Earley  
MOTHER'S TANKSTATION | LONDON  
58-64 Three Colts Lane, Bethnal Green  
April 6–May 18

A rare sunny morning in London: This would be pleasant if it weren't a reminder of hastening climate apocalypse. In this diffused light, the pastel palette and minimal sculptures of Brendan Earley's "Elsewhere and Other Things" at first seem cynically palliative—an injection of millennial pink, a meditation retreat amid alarm bells. Under closer scrutiny, the soothing sentiment starts to decay. *Take the A Train*, 2018, involves two baby-blue aluminum rings, lonely in their separate orbits. In *The Runner*, also 2018, an aluminum arch flirts with anthropomorphism, one "foot" caught in a metal cast of discarded Styrofoam packaging. It dons a tee in heather gray, the preferred cotton blend of *hygge* and gym-class nostalgia. On it is a painstakingly hand-rendered facsimile of the poster for John Carpenter's *Escape from New York* (1981)—the cataclysmic terror cuts some uneasiness into otherwise sedative smoothness.

Earley filters these feelings through the unseen presence of *9 Reports*, 2009, in which Brian O'Doherty's gravelly voice stretches through the gallery, relaying snippets of a J.G. Ballard sci-fi short story in the cadence of a daytime talk-radio host. Details from the text—a meager crew fumbles through the inhospitable environs of a lifeless space station—sound almost natural alongside today's broadcasts on ecological crises. Additional nods to Dieter Rams and Agnes Martin throughout the exhibition create an uneasy dialogue with modernism as this dense, referential batch of work begins to seem whiplashed as it swivels between future and past. The takeaway? A sprawling exhibition text affirms Earley's genuine desire to "heal and unify." Amends must be made in the "[present imperfect]." There is no elsewhere, implies the show's title in all its winking vagueness, recalling a protest sign I saw at an Extinction Rebellion rally on my way here.

— Adina Glickstein