SUBRADAR

THE DECEPTIVE IMAGE IN
THE SCREEN ENVIRONMENT

Curated by Jim Cheatle

GAVIN TURK
ANDREW GRASSIE
NEIL GALL
SUSAN COLLIS
JIM CHEATLE

lauregenillard

laure**genillard**

Established in 1988, Laure Genillard is a private contemporary art exhibition space in Fitzrovia, London, very close to Tottenham Court Road. With an extensive history in the London art scene, the gallery's intention is to engage both selective audiences and a wider, inquisitive community.

Exhibiting artists range from the established, many of whom have a lasting working relationship with Laure Genillard, to young and emerging artists whose work aims to exceed commonplace categorisations. The programme is led by a desire to generate dialogues between various artistic generations and their highly diverse practices. It seeks to be impromptu and un-authoritative, with merits that always remain ambiguous.

The space has a dynamic relationship with independent curators, that help generate additional content such as publications, film screenings, artist talks and live performances. Laure Genillard first opened in Foley Street in 1988, bringing a keen eye on developments in abstract and conceptual art, elaborating on 70's minimal art practices and continuing such discourse. From a Clerkenwell location in 1997, since 2007 it is located at 2 Hanway Place.

Laure Genillard has been seminal to the practices of several British artists, whose work first showcased at her gallery, including Catherine Yass, Fiona Banner, Martin Creed, Peter Doig, Gillian Wearing, Simon Starling as well as many artists from the continent such as Maurizio Cattelan and Sylvie Fleury amongst others.

SUBRADAR
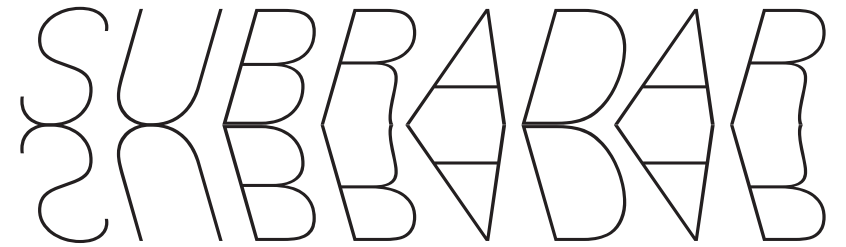
THE DECEPTIVE IMAGE IN
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Parrhasius entered into a pictorial contest with Zeuxis, who represented some grapes, painted so naturally that the birds flew towards the spot where the picture was exhibited. Parrhasius, on the other hand, exhibited a curtain, drawn with such singular truthfulness, that Zeuxis, elated with the judgment which had been passed upon his work by the birds, haughtily demanded that the curtain should be drawn aside to let the picture be seen. Upon finding his mistake, with a great degree of ingenuous candour he admitted that he had been surpassed, for that whereas he himself had only deceived the birds, Parrhasius had deceived him, an artist.

Natural History XXXV:15–941 AD 79 Pliny the Elder

As we retreat even further into the screen, away from the brutal consequences of reality, from the pandemic, global warming, relationships and responsibilities. The perception of the art object becomes ever more fleeting. We proceed to scroll and click our way, through an infinite conveyor belt of images and data, with the same indifference as if they were barcodes at a checkout. There's so much to get through and little time to see it, yet we don't want to miss anything, so we look, but don't quite see as we skim the surface. The critical engagement required to

delve deeper is more difficult today as we sit like stationary flaneurs with no time to lose, with the world at our fingertips, yet no time to explore it. This is also the dominant environment in which works of art are 'seen'- often for the first time, and the ideological conditions in which artworks are ascribed value and understood. The ubiquity of this is so total, it is invisible and therefore experienced as benign.

One thing about which fish know exactly nothing is water, since they have no anti-environment which would enable them to perceive the element they live in.

Marshall McLuhan, War and Peace in the Global Village

The screen environment is not apolitical or inert. It can be characterised by its array of discrete components that offer themselves to the user as malleable assets. It offers clickable partitioned experiences that not only encourage, but assume a way of seeing the world and of seeing each other.

Yet, the computer continues to be a powerful simulator, offering immersive experience, with infinite layers and real world metaphors which we have easily grasped and readily accepted; files, folders, paths, etc. The pixels have long since diminished in size and are no longer discernible, as displays on both desktops and handheld devices offer higher definition, while processing power has increased exponentially to supply them. The screen has become an ever-present material condition of viewing and increasingly this luminous environment provides many with their primary access to the world.

The status of 'the real' has never been more in question, so how does this environment affect how art is made and perceived. How does the deceptive image operate within a deceptive, 'post-truth' virtual world?

We can't look at art with the same innocence of Zeuxis and it's no longer enough to just simply deceive the viewer, but perhaps the artificial curtain, or veil, in Pliny's description above, could be seen as analogous to the present day interface, a movable veil that separates the real world, from the artificial one. If we continue the analogy further, then it might be reasonable to imagine that we have forgotten about the veil entirely, having pulled it back to enter its realm. The deceptive image must now operate and exist within this layered space, as well as the physical one, from within which it was created.

REVEALING REALITIES

The mischievous approach of illusion and then reveal in mimetic works can come across as a dead end strategy if done solely for the sake of deception, but it can also bring into one's awareness the mechanism of the art object and the nature of representation. For the viewer of the trompe l'oeil there are two 'realities' that oscillate between each other, the image and its referent - which become apparent at the point of reveal. However the reveal depends upon the context within which the object is seen, for instance Gavin Turks's 'Flat Tyre' - a bronze cast of a flat tire which is then painted to look real (p9) would almost certainly go unnoticed if it were seen at a scrapyard, but within the sanctity of the white walls of an art gallery it would stand out.

But, there is also a historical context to consider within this space. The tyre might be lost still, if the viewer assumes that this is a straight forward Duchampian readymade. In order for the trompe l'oeil to be revealed, the viewer must look and engage critically with the object, a much easier task when perceived in the physical world. Metaphorically or politically 'Flat Tyre" could be read as a reminder of our waste, a metaphor of a deflated and disregarded ideology. However when seen online, it is contextualised within the ideas and agendas of whatever platform, or search engine which encompasses it. Undoubtedly, the operating conditions of the screen environment are intentionally deceptive. The very idea of friends, followers and likes with other crude Pavlovian crumbs, are served up daily along with clickbait, data misuse and unreadable T&Cs which we bat away like flies. Think of Instagram's infinite algorithmic feed, processing users data 24/7, influencing and controlling not just how content is received but what content is shown.

The complexity is manifold. Consider the experience of viewing the Andrew Grassie painting 'Flat Packed Art Fair', (p11) on the screen. It seems at first glance to be a framed photograph of a warehouse scene. The title tells us that it is in fact a behind the scene backdrop to an art fair. However instead of a physical and direct viewer experience that once might have been the norm, what we're actually looking at is a screen image of a photograph, of another photograph. Which, turns out to be a painting that uses the 'real world' indexicality of a photograph to persuade us it is real.

There are some similarities here to the work of the German photographer Thomas Demand, whose paper reconstructions of prosaic and mundane interior spaces are also labour intensive and worshipfully devoted to detail and simulation. On the surface their subjects are both commonplace and unremarkable, lifeless spaces that are not intended for aesthetic consideration, in contrast to the pseudo religious gallery environment,

within which these works may eventually be situated. This covert strategy allows them to unassumingly creep up on the viewer, revealing their labours with proximate apprehension.

Reflecting further on context and deception, we might think about Jim Cheatle's envelope (p22) titled; 'Please Find Enclosed the Remainder of the Paint You Lent Me: An Intimate Note on the Absurdity of Painting'. Here he recreates (via painted cast) an absurd narrative within an everyday object, a white envelope, seemingly filled with thick white paint. Once the envelope is secured to the wall it takes on a meaning beyond its everyday function and relates more to painting. However its pre-transfigured associated meanings are brought along with it. So intimacy, privacy, and communication might now be invoked, along with reflexivity, mark-making and gesture.

This sensous simulacra can be thought of within the realm of surrealism or 'expanded painting' - the idea of paint is conveyed without paint being used, and the message is delivered regardless, albeit a step removed.

Susan Collis has a different deceptive strategy. She seemingly presents us with found everyday objects which are stained, scratched, worn and disregarded. Unwanted items from the skip or side of the road that evidence a forgotten human activity. Upon closer inspection all our assumptions are inverted, we see that these objects are quite the opposite, they are recreations and transfigurations of the real into the hyperreal.

This inversion is key to the work of Collis and her macro interventions will only become apparent at a close and intimate distance. A stain on a broken shard of pine wood, when examined closely, is seen to be an exquisite marquetry inlay of a precious material. A randomly left behind screw in the wall, turns out to be a reproduction of the screw made from 9ct hallmarked gold. Collis is interested in the shift of perception that occurs when the audience discover that these traces of damage are, in fact, intentional acts within the art-making process. In 'Tongue and Groove' discarded lengths of nailed and chipped wood, perhaps from a ripped out refurbishment project, are rebuilt and re-invented using exotic hardwoods and veneers, lapis lazuli, beeswax and silver. From a distance this object looks like it did when found, when close it reveals its inordinate labours. Perhaps these discarded offerings are metaphorical and represent something of our values, the cyclic collapse and renewal that is part of our existence, or the disposable cost of our march towards improvement.

The artist Neil Gall constructs his own source image, from equally low status materials, such as torn and cut coloured papers, ripped cardboard and tape. He creates a physical model or assemblage with the sole intention of making a meticulous photorealistic oil painting from its photograph. The best word to describe this process is bricolage, making something from nothing, or from very little. As with many artists here there's a spirit of Arte Povera, or of improvisation which speaks to the freedom of artistic autonomy.

When seen online, especially at a reduced scale, Gall's work is difficult to distinguish from the photograph it is derived from, so in a sense his painting, if made successfully will disappear. The assemblage or bricolage functions like a sketch and Gall will use it to figure out, in a very tactile way, what the final painting will look like. In 'Overlap and Misuse' he weaves together a patchwork jumble of coloured papers which appear as offcuts from other projects. Masking tape loosely affixes some pieces on the top layers and the holes that the shapes create, appear to reveal a white empty space behind – perhaps the gallery wall it will eventually reside on, or the white background of a web browser. When this is depicted in oil paint these details will help sell the illusion and persuade the viewer it is real.

Most of the works selected here operate at a close distance, they demand a certain intimacy and attention. In a sense, they are the antithesis of clickbait images, they hide in plain sight and deliver more than they promise. However, while there is arguably a resurgence of mimetic art, there's also a portentous inundation of works with a technological impetus, such as NFTs, art which is created specifically to be viewed on the screen. It is likely, that this capitalistic and dematerialised trend will gather momentum - and imaginable that most artists, have already felt the pull of the screen environment. Perhaps they are making work now which is more 'screenable' more immediately accessible to the fleeting user, perhaps without even being fully aware?

The veil can never be pulled back, but we can remember that it's there. We might do this by critically engaging with technology, rather than passively relying upon it, so that the oscillating image and its referent will reveal them-selves for what they are.

GAVIN TURK

The sanctity and reverence of the art object as seen in galleries and museums, is questioned and confronted by Turk's trompe l'oeil works. His vitrines emphasise this, like meticulously prepared confidence men that operate so smoothly, it's a pleasure to be taken in by them. The vitrines are there to 'sell' you their contents, which turn out to be painted replicas, but in another twist, the paint hides a bronze cast - which references a historical tradition, returning us back to the museum and the vitrine. This spirit of mischievous theatricality is common in Turk's deceptive works. His objects when isolated and transfigured through painstaking reproduction have a poetic and metaphorical sense to them which elevates them from their abject 'real' world counterparts, while revealing something of the operations of their environment.

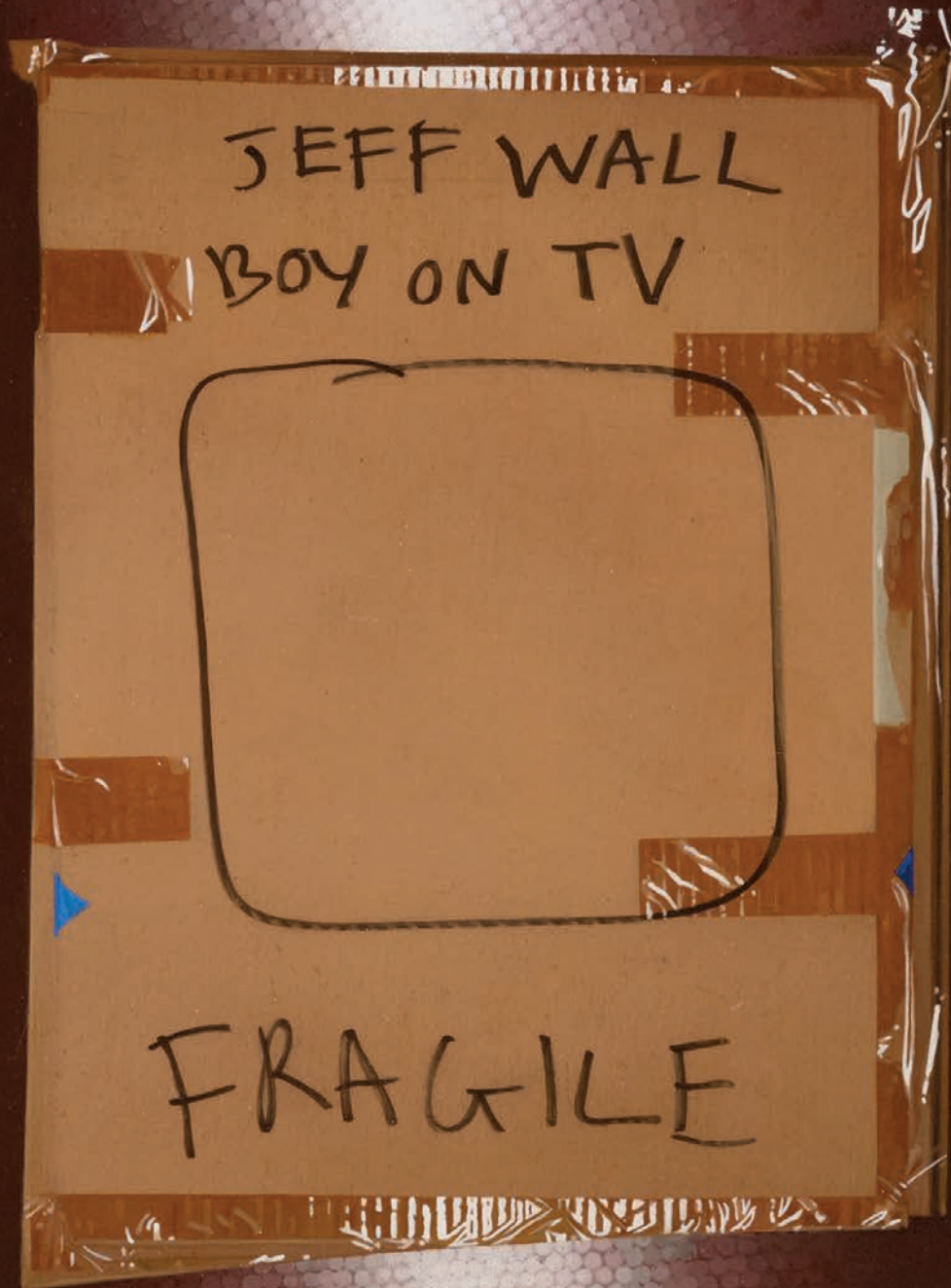Triple QX, ATF Plus, 2015

(Right) Pile (Wrapped Waste), 2016

Broken Clock, 2018

Flat Tyre, 2013

ANDREW GRASSIE

The fidelity and authenticity of photographs are now more than ever open to question, as they are easier than ever to manipulate by others. However it is still reasonable to imagine that some subjects rather than others are more likely to be 'adjusted'. For instance, advertising images, product images and clickbait images, all would have obvious motives for digital enhancement. Whereas reference images, images of mechanical parts and say, medical images are perhaps more credible. The former categories allude to that which can be sold, either products or ideals. They attempt to persuade the viewer that something is better than it is. Grassie's images fall into the latter category and this is partly how he is able to fly under the radar.

Grassie's meticulously detailed egg tempera paintings allude to multiple layers of meaning. They are reflexive and knowing, exposing something of the environment they will be situated in. The 'shop floor' of the commercial art gallery functions like any other reseller. Analogous to a meticulously maintained interface, the user or viewer should have no distractions beyond the white walls that would disrupt the function of the space. Behind the scenes we see the economic engine, the machinations that are hidden from view and this is what he draws attention to.

(Left) Package: Jeff Wall, 'Boy on TV' (detail), 2018   (Above) Flat Packed Art Fair (detail), 2016

Package: Mapplethorpe, Black and White (Face), 2018
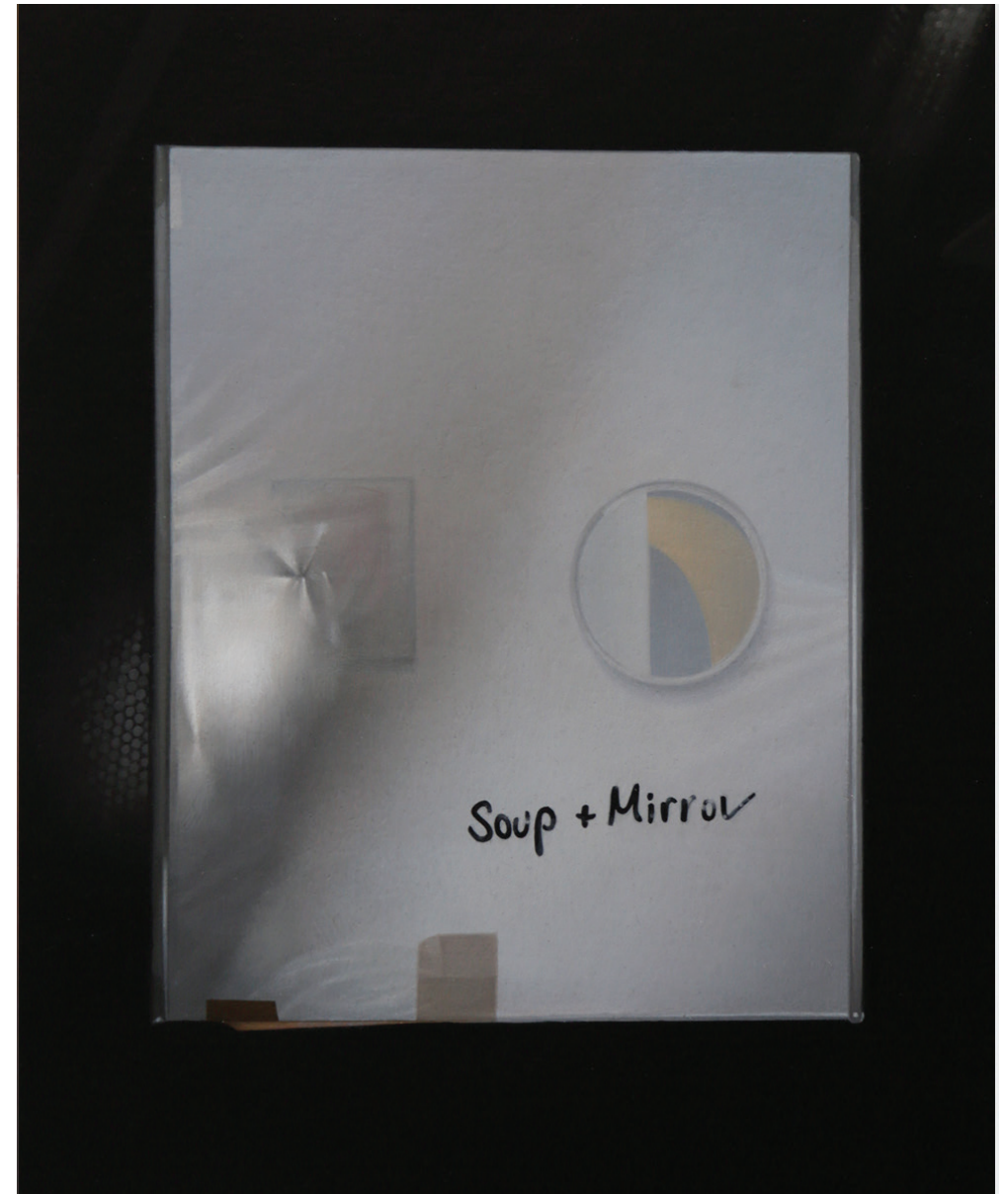
Package: Louise Lawler, Soup + Mirror, 2018

Overlap and Misuse, 2021

NEIL GALL

You would be forgiven for mistaking Neil Gall's photorealistic depictions of his own playful models or bricolages as their referents, especially while scrolling. With perhaps a nod to Abstract Expressionism and Arte Povera, he constructs his makeshift paper or tape models with painting in mind, and the model acts as both subject and sketch. Either deadpan detritus of papery scraps, assembled with seeming childlike abandon. Or packaging materials, secured and restrained in a bondage like manner. Gall's painting then, really starts here and it is formed from the tactile sensation of the hand and an unfolding intuition. Once complete the model is photographed and the image is then gridded up, enlarged onto canvas, then closely depicted in oil paint.

There is a distinct difference between Gall's paper based models and his tape versions. The former feels childlike and the latter adult like. School craft project versus S&M bondage session, innocence versus fetish. Gall's stretched and distorted tapes operate like gestural brushstrokes, with a start and a stop point, a fixed width and a gloss surface reified through an elastic materiality. The time and conviction spent in these painted depictions is in stark contrast to the seemingly haphazard nature of the model. In a sense they're gestural, but the gesture exists in the forming of the model as opposed to the brushwork. The methodical production of the painting, quietly honours the gesture, keeping out of its way. These are methodical paintings in service to the visceral.

Unhinged, 2020

Lick My Decals, 2021-22

Face-Off, 2021-22

SUSAN COLLIS

Susan Collis is interested in mark making but not of the gestural kind. Her assisted readymade objects celebrate the historical marks left as evidence of human activity, on the prosaic and disregarded object. Of all the artists here Collis is perhaps the most subtle and while you'd be forgiven for missing her work entirely on the screen, the unprepared might miss it in the physical realm also. Only on closer inspection is the curious observer rewarded with the most unexpected reveals.

There's a well trodden trope in children's stories called King Incognito, that typically recounts the tale of a king or aristocrat who dresses as a commoner and travels about their land in order to test the responses of their subjects. In the end the diligent and conscientious are generously rewarded for their kind attention. This devious strategy attempts to lower the guard of the beholder and from a storytelling perspective it enables a big finale.

Putting aside the problematic presuppositions of this tale there's a similarity here that's in keeping to looking at the work of Collis. Perhaps we can think of it as a test that questions the viewer. What does it mean to take something of no value, such as discarded wood scraps and transform them? Or to hide ones meticulously devoted labour in plain sight?

This Way Up, 2022

The Centre Cannot Hold
(Over and Above), 2018
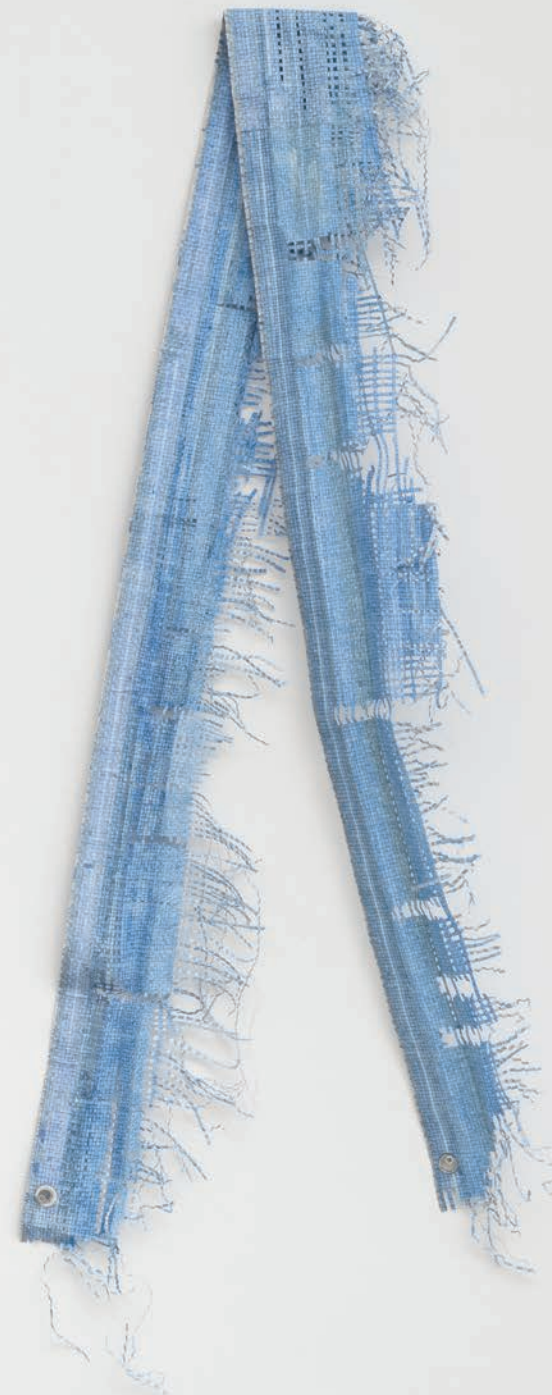
Tongue and Groove, 2009

State Border, 2010

JIM CHEATLE

Cheatle's sculptural wall mounted painted casts relate to his ideas on mark making in relation to painting. The motif of white paint used as a sculptural material can be seen in many of his recent works. He will typically build a model which will be subsequently destroyed through the process of moulding and casting. The reproduction is then painted to look 'real'.

He describes feeling that he "no longer believed in the validity and credibility of making direct paintings via hand made marks" and consequently he's come to approach painting somewhat via the back door. This twice removed way of looking seems like an attempt to objectify the subjective, to distance himself from the work so that he doesn't get in the way of it.

'Closed Triptych' for instance takes the historically religious concept of a hinged wooden panel support and combines it with a twentieth century sensuous object materiality. Corpulent ribbons of paint ooze out from the edges, through the hinges and gaps because the doors have been closed and the viscous materiality of the contents has been squeezed out. The form that the paint takes is related to the closing of the hinged wooden support, however what's perhaps not clear to the viewer is to what extent this form is fictive, would paint really behave in this manner if subjected to these constraints?

Please find Enclosed the Remainder of the Paint You Lent Me; An Intimate Note on The Absurdity of Painting, 2021

Closed Triptych, 2020

Heavyweight Tondo. 2022

I've Left You a Fucking Sandwich: An Intimate Note to Painting. 2021

EXHIBITED WORKS

GAVIN TURK
Triple QX, ATF Plus
2015
Painted bronze
13.5 x 28 x 21 cm
Edition 1 of 8 (#1/8)

Pile (Wrapped Waste)
2016
Painted bronze, wood,
glass and linen
Bronze: 61.5 x 50 x 33.5 cm
Edition 1 of 8 (#1/8)

Broken Clock
2018
Patinated Bronze
27.6 x 6.9 x 6.9 cm
Edition of 8 + 2 AP

Flat Tyre
2013
Painted bronze
56 x 64 x 20 cm
Edition of 8 and 2 AP

ANDREW GRASSIE
Package: Jeff Wall,
'Boy on TV' [1]
2018
Egg Tempera on Paper
on Board
32 x 29 cm (framed)

Package: Mapplethorpe
black and white (Face) [2]
2018
Egg Tempera on Paper
on Board
32 x 29 cm (framed)

Package: Louise Lawler,
Soup + Mirror [2]
2018
Egg Tempera on Paper
on Board
32 x 29 cm (framed)

Flat Packed Art Fair [2]
2017
Egg Tempera on Paper
on Board
26.2 × 32.6 cm (Framed)

NEIL GALL
Unhinged [3]
2020
Oil on canvas
178 x 142 cm

Overlap and Misuse [3]
2021
Oil on canvas
178 x 142 cm

Face-Off [3]
2021-22
Oil on canvas
100 x 78 cm

Lick My Decals [3]
2021-22
Oil on canvas
110 x 87 cm

SUSAN COLLIS
Tongue and Groove [4]
2009
Red cedarwood, apple, walnut
sapwood veneer, powdered
lapis lazuli, beeswax, silver.
182 x 290 x 10 cm

State Border [4]
2010
Sonokeling rosewood,
bog oak, walnut, white holly
91.5 x 48.5 x 2.5 cm

The Centre Cannot Hold
(Over and Above) [4]
2018
Ink and pencil on paper,
Sterling silver (hallmarked)
147 x 30 x 18 cm

This Way Up [4]
2022
9 carat yellow gold
(hallmarked). Brown
goldstone, agate
1 x 1 x 1 cm
Edition 1 of 3

JIM CHEATLE
Closed Triptych
2020
Painted cast
58 x 37 x 11 cm

Please Find Enclosed the
Remainder of the Paint You
Lent Me; An Intimate Note
on the Absurdity of Painting
2021
Painted cast
19 x 15 x 5 cm

I've Left You a Fucking
Sandwich: An Intimate
Note to Painting
2021
Painted cast
18.5 x 14 x 6 cm

Heavyweight Tondo
2022
Painted cast, silicone, oak.
30 x 30 x 27 cm