

Joe Clark

Polychroming

22 January - 19 February 2015

Opening: Thursday 22 January 2015, 6pm

In Conversation: Wednesday 4 February 2015, 7pm

- with independent curator Michael Birchall

Polychroming is a new project by English artist Joe Clark and his first exhibition in Berlin. In the exhibition space, the visitor is first confronted by the rear of a construction of MDF and timber wedged at a slight angle between the floor and ceiling. Approaching the installation as if entering a theatrical stage from behind the scenes, the construction turns out to serve as a screen for the projected video work *Asset Management #7* (2014). The crisp and vibrant video image shows an abstract chrome figure set against a shifting field of colour which similarly waxes and wanes, thus continually re-colouring its subject and 're-rendering' the image. The title of the exhibition refers to the traditional technique of hand-colouring the surfaces of stone or wooden sculptures in order to mimic life. *Polychroming* hence alludes to this historical technique and echoes of it in relation to contemporary image production processes.

Working from a position of both fascination and deep distrust, Clark's practice pulls from the contemporary photographic idiom, exploring and exposing the explicit and implicit rules of photography; its techniques and mechanisms; its effects and our perception of them. Understanding photography as a symbol producing apparatus, the artist's criticism is directed towards the prevailing idea of the possibility of an 'analogue' or indexical image – one which not only represents, but in fact bears witness to the physical existence of an object in space and time. Clark's wide ranging subjects have included anonymous industrial buildings, mirrors set in the landscape, sea grass composed against the ground of the sky and abstract polygonal constructions which, purposefully lit, play tricks on the viewer's eye. They all have in common their careful selection, assembly and staging for the camera, ventriloquizing processes often used to make contemporary images, but doing so by hand with the means available to an individual. Clark's photographic subjects thus speak of what is absent from the image itself – the artist's hand constructing, composing, and manipulating the image.

An aspect of this is the way Clark addresses the possibilities and the perception of so-called CGIs (computer generated images). Today, computer technologies allow the advertising and movie industries to create hyper real, photorealistic images produced in virtual space via software rendering. While these images have long been part of popular visual consciousness and culture, the idea of photographic credibility – photography as a reliable, unbiased wit-

ness of reality – persists. Fascinated by the tension that lies in the coexistence of the analogue and the virtual in contemporary photographic imagery, Clark brings back and anchors the possibilities of the hyper real virtual worlds in the physical reality of the photographer's studio.

While in *Balsa*, a black and white print from the artist's series *Poly* from 2012, Clark is concerned with an analogue echoing of virtual 3D modelling, in *Asset Management #7* (2014), Clark imitates and challenges the aesthetics of software rendered atmospheric effects as seen in photo-real CGIs including reflections, refractions and colouring. The artist has produced the video in-camera via a physical apparatus in his studio, creating an analogue of the virtual potential of CGIs, pushing information through an established workflow in an unfamiliar direction. In Clark's apparatus, reminiscent of Plato's cave from the famous allegory, the subject of the image, an abstract mirrored object of indeterminate size, has been enveloped by a screen-rig, which allows the projection of an environment around it. Navigating through a spherical image of a desert plain, the artist causes the light from that distant place to dance across the multifaceted surface, thereby grounding it in a reality, but at the same time rendering it to the viewer as legible as the shadows on a cave's wall.

Seemingly a coda to the exhibition, *Untitled* (2015) is a black and white print, which can be seen as an unintentional and poetic by-product from a recent and as yet unpublished photographic series. Earlier this year on a moonlit beach, Clark photographed clouds of sand thrown into the darkness and frozen into complex forms by the flash of the camera. The artist's hand being accidentally caught in the frame results in a picture which captures simultaneously the magic of the concept and the charm of the real.

Joe Clark (1982, UK) lives and works in London and Berlin. He holds a degree in Fine Art from Northumbria University (2004) and graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art MFA in London in 2010. Joe Clark was awarded the DLA Piper Award in 2005 and has twice been a recipient of Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts scheme, in Japan in 2004 and in Brazil in 2012. Furthermore he participated in several residency programmes including Fort George, Island of Vis, Croatia (2013), La Fragua, Córdoba, Spain (2013), FAAP, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2012) and Fusion: Rebuild, Zagora, Morocco (2008).

Solo Exhibitions (selection): *Every song the same*, Workplace London, UK (2014), Art Rotterdam, New Art Section (XPO Gallery), NL; *Shimmer*, XPO Gallery, Paris, FR (2012), *Screen test (for a hero shot)*, Workplace Gallery, Gateshead, UK (2012).

Group Exhibitions (selection): Art LA Contemporary (Workplace Gallery), LA, US (2014), *Double Blind*, 4 Windmill Street, London, UK (2014), *Now Showing*, Carroll / Fletcher, London, UK (2014); *SUMMM*, Norman Rea gallery, York University, UK (2013), *9ways to say its over*, 20 Farringdon street, London, UK (2013), *Be Like Water*, Workplace Gallery, Gateshead, UK (2013), *Uncle Vern's Dog*, Galley North, Newcastle, UK (2013), Dallas Art Fair, Dallas (Workplace Gallery), US (2013); *Higher Atlas*, Marrakech Biennale 4, Marrakech, MA (2012), *Instinct for the Actual*, Cold Harbour London, London, UK (2011), *Fired Up*, The Old Dairy, London, UK (2011).