

MOUSSE - MAGAZINE

Hugh Scott-Douglas: "eyes without a face" at Croy Nielsen

May 2014



Installation view at Croy Nielsen

Hugh Scott-Douglas' second solo exhibition at the gallery features two new large sculptures as well as new works from the series 'Chopped Bills'.

Each of the sculptures consist of stacks of news papers on a EUR-pallet. The images in the papers stem from Delcampe; an auction platform with over 242 million items, of which many are made of paper – stamps, postcards, bank notes, books, phone cards and lottery tickets etc. Paradoxically, Delcampe is both about saving and consuming, and equally intriguing is the nature of its collection: it is never static, nor planned, but in a constant state of evolution. Each news paper produced by Scott-Douglas represents a specific search algorithm from the site. The images are frozen in the sense that they represent what is

available for that market at the specific moment of the search. Scraps of old paper, each one employed at some point in the past to facilitate some form of exchange (tickets, bank notes etc.), have been reassembled, reconstituted and applied back onto paper. The nature of the sculpture is photographic and derived from the distribution of the papers. The length of the work's display represents its time of exposure, proximity of acquisitive hands, aesthetic sensibilities of the viewers – and other unimagined contingencies – all contribute (randomly) to the forming of the sculpture. It is sculpted by debt, by the removal of the available. In this way, it gives form through the negative (like a photograph, or a classic sculpture).

The series 'Chopped Bills' is based on exogenous marks, commonly referred to as "chopmarks" found on circulating bank notes. Bastards from birth, these opaque signifiers have generally resisted all attempts to determine definitively their assigned meaning. We can assume that they, at least in their moment of conception, were some sort of visual transient note – assigned to allocate them a place in some secondary axis of circulation. Nestled within the confines of the minted image, these small stamps give the bank note a sense of identity, even if only to its marker. Furthermore, the chopmarks are a break with structure, order, and form: by law in America, graphic imaging software programs are unable to scan currency, but the stamps change the appearance of the bills, making them accessible to digital appropriation. Scott-Douglas uses the alien ink marks to override internal blocks. Employing the tools of Photoshop, his project becomes formatting the digital information on the bank note, to which the (contingent) chopmark has effectively given him access. The mysterious origins and contingency of these stamps are part of the power of the resulting image, created in unique versions through dye-sublimation on linen.

Involved in the migration of images and abstractions across the mediums of painting, photography, and pure numerical data, the exhibition is a continuation of Scott-Douglas' interest in the meanings and metaphors of digitization, economics and the aesthetic potential of mechanical production.