

HUGH SCOTT-DOUGLAS: "Promises to Pay in Solid Substance"

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Hugh Scott-Douglas, *Untitled*, 2014. Set of ten images, UV curable ink on styrene in frame, wrapped in polyester with tape, 18 1/4 x 13 1/4 inches each. Courtesy of Jessica Silverman Gallery and the artist.

Hugh Scott-Douglas, "Promises to Pay in Solid Substance," 2014, Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco. Installation view. Courtesy of Jessica Silverman Gallery and the artist.

In his essay "From Image to Media File: Art in the Age of Digitalization," art critic, media theorist, and philosopher Boris Groys describes the notion of "original" for digital photographs as no longer accurate.^[1] In today's world of digitized images and virtual means of distribution, digital pictures have rather become copies, often absorbed into an invisible and intangible space—the web—where the notion of original, ownership and authorship have lost their initial meaning.

Brooklyn-based artist Hugh Scott-Douglas similarly considers questions raised by the immateriality of digital photography in his solo exhibition at Jessica Silverman Gallery in San Francisco. The exhibition features four of the artist's new or recent series that visually stage different relationships between original and copy, visible and invisible, tangibility and intangibility. Together, the four series investigate questions raised by the materiality of digital photographs, the way these photographs circulate through today's digital realm, and the value system these images represent.

The exhibition layout comes to underline these explorations while creating complex associations between them. For instance, on each wall, one

photograph from "The Economist" series (in which Scott-Douglas appropriated, processed, and enlarged uncredited images from English-language weekly newspaper *The Economist*) is hung next to another from the "Screentones" series, so close that they almost create a diptych. This pairing seems to suggest a connection between the appropriation and acknowledgement of the media source, and the materialization of Scott-Douglas's work-making processes through its residues. Perhaps this installation, ironically, comments on the almost non-existent authorship and ownership of images in today's news media. Yet, Scott-Douglas's process—appropriating, processing, recording, enlarging—can possibly emphasize his personal attempt to negotiate the currency of the image in today's society of spectacle. The artist exhibits the invisible, making copying reversible by transforming a copy into an original.