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DOUBLE-BLIND

with Douglas Allsop, Adam Bainbridge, Ross Chisholm,
Joe Clark and Anna M. R. Freeman. Curated by Thomas Cuckle

OPENING 23 JANUARY, 6PM – 9PM UNTIL 21 FEBRUARY 2014

The mirror itself is not subject to duration, because it is an ongoing abstraction that is always available and timeless. The reflections, on the other hand, are fleeting instances that evade measure.

Robert Smithson, 'Incidents of Mirror-Travel in the Yucatan', Artforum, 1969

In Andrei Tarkovsky's 'The Mirror' (1975) a mirror is a metonym for memory; but those memories come alive, the mirror-image is no longer secondary to reality and starts to become confused with real things. In *Double-Blind* the mirror-image takes on as great a weight as its double, confounding, interrupting and proposing new realities.

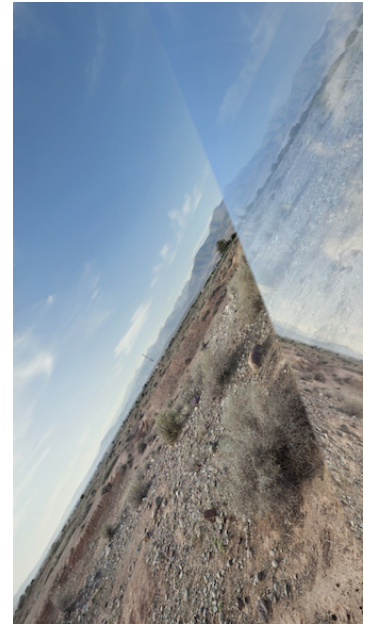
In Anna M. R. Freeman's paintings the spatial coordinates of domestic interiors are fragmented by compositional devices, including the recurrent presence of mirrored surfaces. What results is a mirror-blindness – the distinctions between reality and its double are erased. The mirror-image, otherwise composed of light, is replaced by something solid, the mirror becomes a doorway, a screen, a barrier. Just as in Tarkovsky's film, the spaces depicted are chosen in reference to layers of meaning not inherent to these places.

Robert Smithson, in his essay 'Incidents of Mirror-Travel in the Yucatan' (1969), references the transcendent idea of the mirror as a portal for travel. The mirror's reflections are described as being outside of time; both infinite and fleeting. Adam Bainbridge's painstaking pencil on paper works share this quality of fragments not subject to duration. In this imagined world, seen through a glass darkly, life flourishes out of inanimate objects. The fleeting instances pictured give a sense of a reality which is a fantastical double of mundane suburban existence.

As Smithson's 1969 series of 'Mirror Displacements' used mirrors to combine earth and sky in one image, Joe Clark's 'Asset Management' series of video and digital print works reflects on an invisible virtual world – digitally imposed spherical photography – used in the production of automobile advertising images. In the place of a product, Clark posits arbitrary mirror fragments, themselves free of content, but reflecting the photographic assets he has gathered in his travels in Brazil.

When the mirror-image holds the attention, something is hidden in its shadow. Douglas Allsop's 'Blind Screens' are made from video tape stretched across a room to produce a visual barrier, shimmering and reflecting the viewer's gaze. This new wall which bisects the gallery space creates a state of double-blindness, as vision from one side or the other is interrupted. But the sight which is lost is replaced with a kind of double-vision as the glossy stripes reflect back the room behind the viewer.

The artist's use of the mirror as a formal device has a long history: a means to positioning the viewer within the work; demonstrating technical skill; or as a tool for understanding the principles of perspective. Out of a lineage of portrait painting Ross Chisholm reinterprets the theme through the lens of contemporary technological reproduction. Like an analogue copy, the double of 'cat reverb' (2010) suffers a degeneration in resolution and fidelity. The twice mirrored panels of 'last dance' (2011) become increasingly sharp, but their acid hues suggest a chemical process, or even the faux-authentic filters of Instagram.



Joe Clark
Anti Atlas, 2013
HD video
9 min 35

Courtesy of the artist and Workplace Gallery, UK



Douglas Allsop
Blind Screen, 2000
video tape, aluminium profile rails
100 x 600 x 2 cm
Courtesy of Bartha Contemporary Ltd. London
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Markham,
Froggatt
and Irwin