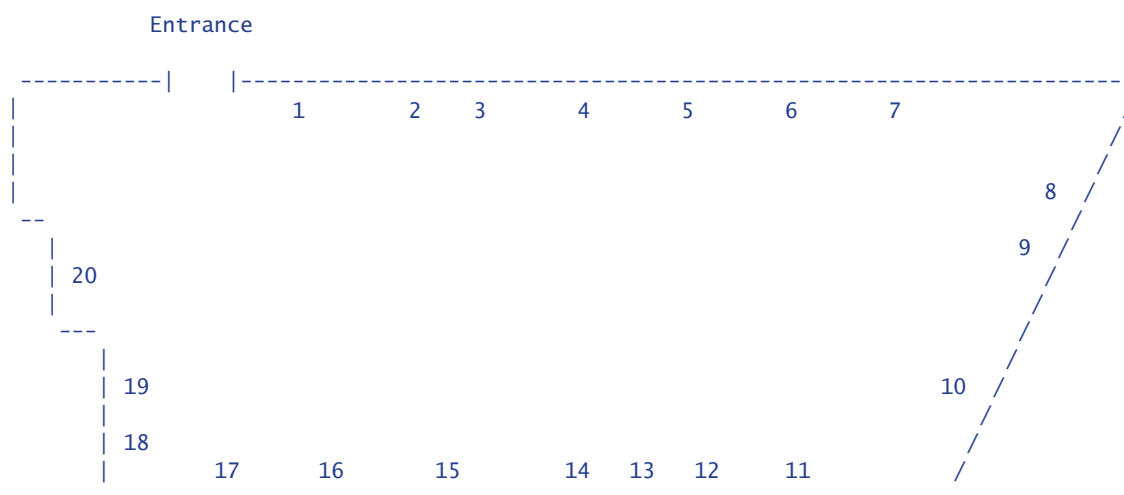


*Screen  
Space*



[1]  
LUKE RUDOLF, *Portrait No.38*, 2012  
Acrylic on canvas, 220 × 165 cm

[2]  
BEN COVE, *Interloper*, 2014  
Acrylic on panel, 62.5 × 50 cm

[3]  
BEN COVE, *Freeloader*, 2014  
Acrylic on panel, 40 × 40 cm

[4]  
MARTINE POPPE, *Analogical Change #28*, 2014  
Oil on polyester restoration fabric, 160 × 120 cm

[5]  
MARTINE POPPE,  
*Analogical Change #33*, 2014  
Oil on polyester restoration fabric, 160 × 120 cm

[6]  
CHRISTOPHER PAGE,  
*Summerhouse*, 2014  
Oil on canvas, 45 × 40 cm

[7]  
MARTINE POPPE,  
*Analogical Change #35*, 2014  
Oil on polyester restoration fabric, 160 × 120 cm

[8]  
CHRISTOPHER HANLON, *Leaf*, 2012  
Oil on linen stretched over board,  
21.5 × 30 cm

[9]  
THOMAS HUTTON, *Hearth*, 2014  
Stucco and pigment on Dibond,  
60 × 100 × 0.3 cm

[10]  
CHRISTOPHER PAGE,  
*A Party in Seville*, 2014  
Oil on canvas, 225 × 190 cm

[11]  
LUKE RUDOLF, *Triptych 02*, 2012  
Acrylic on canvas,  
62 × 48 cm (each)

[12]  
ALEX BALL, *Relief II*, 2014  
Aluminium and graphite on chalk gesso panel, 74 × 51 cm

[13]  
ALEX BALL,  
*Untitled (Study for Scrawl)*, 2014  
Oil on linen, 28 × 21 cm

[14]  
ALEX BALL, *Scrawl*, 2014  
Oil on linen, 50 × 40 cm

[15]  
GORDON CHEUNG,  
*Exile (Screw #3)*, 2014  
Financial newspaper collage and acrylic on canvas, 150 × 100 cm

[16]  
CHRISTOPHER PAGE,  
*October on Stromboli*, 2014  
Oil on canvas, 55 × 45 cm

[17]  
GORDON CHEUNG,  
*Data Dredge (Screw #8)*, 2014  
Financial newspaper collage and acrylic on canvas, 80 × 100 cm

[18]  
CHRISTOPHER HANLON, *Leaf*, 2011  
Oil on linen stretched over board,  
21 × 31 cm

[19]  
CHRISTOPHER HANLON, *Untitled*, 2014  
Oil on linen stretched over board,  
46 × 31 cm

[20]  
GORDON CHEUNG,  
*Déjà Vu (Screw #2)*, 2014  
Financial newspaper and acrylic on canvas, 75 × 54 cm

## SCREEN SPACE

Alex Meurice

*Screen Space* emerges from a set of conversations between Alex Ball and myself around the role of painting in a world permeated with digital screens. The questions that arise from the screen are central to Alex's thinking, facets of which he fluently articulates in his essay – 'The Betrayal of Images' – published on page 3 of this catalogue. Our working premise is that painting has always responded to and informed its contemporaneous technologies of image production and distribution. This dialectic, which continues into the present day, has accelerated with the advent of digital screens and image processing software, and locates *Screen Space* in a historical context.

The works selected for this exhibition respond to the question of painting's characteristic qualities and continued relevance today. Of the eight artists selected for the exhibition, most are now based in London or have studied here in the past. More importantly, these artists belong to a generation which consciously experienced the digital screen revolution at a formative time in their lives, notably in the fields of cinema, photography, architecture, computer games and graphic design. Perhaps it is the shared experience of digital disruption which has motivated this generation of artists to articulate new possibilities for painting in the age of screens.

Curiously, sculpture and architecture make a cameo appearance here which threatens to upstage the focus on painting. The flat, rectangular format of these paintings, their shallow perspectival depths and smooth surfaces, have much in common with the screens of phones, computers and television. Yet the fifteenth-century metaphor for painting, as an 'open window' which frames a perspectival space beyond the picture plane, is equally pertinent. Nonetheless,

the 'windows' here partition, conceal and distort the perspectives they offer, robbing the viewer of a satisfying resolution, thereby clearing a space for an embodied perception of their content.

Our ability to resolve these paintings optically, from a fixed point of view, is cast into doubt. We are tempted to closely inspect the surface of each work, to steer our body in an arc for an oblique perspective, even to steal a glance over the shoulder to catch the painting unawares. This embodied perception, of paintings which appropriate and adapt the idiom of digital screens, comes as a surprise. Many the artists in this exhibition have trained as sculptors or architects, or explicitly use modelling processes in the creation of their paintings. As such, rather than losing ourselves in the glow of a disembodied digital screen, we are repaid with a more acute and sensitive perception of the material world around us.

The help and support of the artists exhibited in *Screen Space* has been indispensable in putting together this exhibition. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Alex Ball, Gordon Cheung, Ben Cove, Christopher Hanlon, Thomas Hutton, Christopher Page, Martine Poppe and Luke Rudolf for being so generous with their time and trusting with their work. I am also grateful for the support of the galleries that have lent pieces, namely Edel Assanti, Domo Baal, Kristin Hjellegjerde, and Kate MacGarry. Finally, many thanks to Stephen Barrett for the catalogue design, to Ishai Rimmer for technical assistance, to Jamila Brown and The Pickle Factory, and to Jose da Silva and the Art Licks Weekend team.

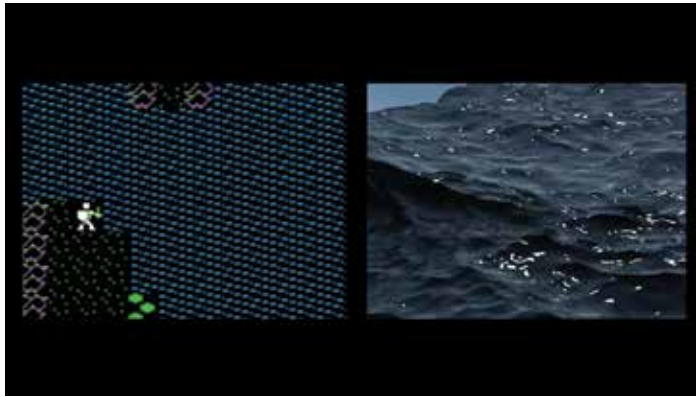
## THE BETRAYAL OF IMAGES

Alex Ball

The evolving relationship between technologies of painting and the screen alerts us to the complex synergies, transformations and betrayals of vision that have occurred with each new development in artistic surface and platform. In his book *Historical Grammar of the Visual Arts* the art historian Alois Riegl proposed a history of human perception that charted a shift from a tactile to an increasingly optical understanding of the world. According to Riegl the art of Ancient Egypt reveals a deep suspicion of the optical distortions and contradictions that comprise an experience of vision unsubstantiated by touch. It was this, he supposed, that led to the production of images and reliefs that appear as flattened out surfaces all existing on the same plane, a series of fixed units to be grasped without reference to distance. Through Ancient Greek and Roman art, Riegl traces the development of modelling and form in representation, and a relationship emerging between the subjects being depicted and the landscape in which they exist. The High Renaissance, for Riegl, represented a mastery of the senses, a system of representation that united an understanding of distances with a grasp of the plasticity and form of the subjects being depicted.

Leon Battista Alberti's treatise on painting, published in 1436, exemplified this moment of understanding, contributing to the new ideas of architects and mathematicians of the time and symbolising a break with the depiction of space in medieval painting. The new technology that allowed for this mastery of space was single point perspective, whereby the painting, through the construction of a planar grid, functions as a continuation of the space the artists' body inhabits. Representing a mid point between two pyramids, the points of which extend from the eyes of the static viewer and the horizon line of the scene being depicted, the support (or canvas) is regarded by

Alberti as 'an open window through which I see what I want to paint.'\* The flatness of the surface plane that Riegl identified in images from Antiquity was now, following Alberti's treatise, able to unfold into an optically consistent illusory space and offer a view into a microcosmic world ordered through geometry, as exemplified by painters like Piero della Francesca and Leonardo da Vinci.



Harun Farocki, still from *Parallel*, 2012

More than five centuries later this unfolding of space has, it would seem, been mirrored by the developments that have taken place in the production of images in computing, and their manifestations on the digital screen. In his 2012 film *Parallel*, Harun Farocki explored how images produced by digital technologies, in the effort to master and depict space, followed an uncannily similar trajectory to that taken by the history of painting from Antiquity to the Renaissance. From block-like, two-dimensional graphics occupying a single plane, through to open-world games governed by engines such as 'Unity', these technologies have mirrored the developments in painters' constructions of space in a remarkably shorter time frame. *Parallel* goes beyond mere appearances, however, to literally get under the surface of these digital worlds. At one point the camera pans below the surface of simulated water

in an immaculately rendered landscape to reveal that there is no sea bed, no substance below, just the inverse of the top of the water surface, illusion folded back to reveal its flatness. So too in painting the logic of under-painting and glazing is employed to convey a sense of an underlying interior or depth below a surface. Both methods of image production might be said to produce 'textures' and effects that belie their infrathin structures.

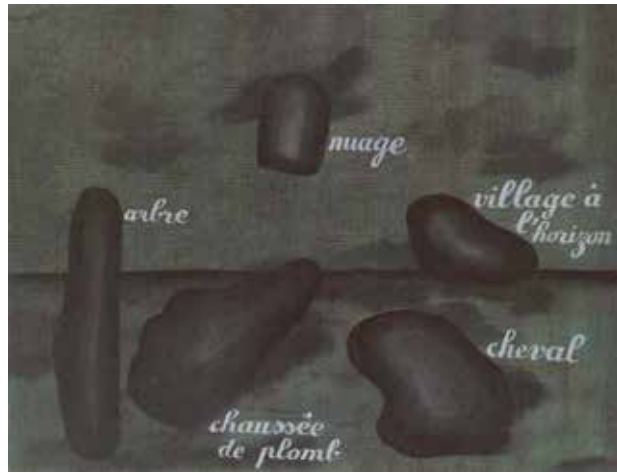
Alberti's comparison of the painting support to an open window has of course been continually challenged. In particular many painters have reconsidered experiences of sight, assessing vision as not so much static and metric, but binocular, kinaesthetic and temporal. Contemplating this break from the dominance of perspectival space, as evidenced in the work of artists like Cézanne, Jean-François Lyotard writes, 'it is as if the painter no longer placed us in the spatial cube (looking out), but at the threshold of the eye, to allow us to see...what seeing is'.† With the dissolution of the window, painting was able to model spaces with varying competing planes, no longer Euclidian and metric, but topological and differential – morphing spaces of manifold surfaces. Meanwhile the painter's support could become, among other things, a flattened grid, an inscriptive surface, or a plane of speeds and gestures referencing temporality as oppose to spatiality.

The computer screen for its part perhaps behaves less like a window and more like a stage set. You choose the backdrop of your screensaver and draw together multiple windows and thumbnails to sit alongside and overlap one another, fracturing the single point perspective. Through the computer you can

\* Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. John R. Spencer, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970, p.55.

† Jean-François Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, trans. Antony Hudek and Mary Lydon, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, p.197.

even be present in multiple different places at the same time. Performing as a system akin to Eileen Grey's iconic *Brick Screen* – an interior-partitioning screen made up of interlocking and rotating panels – the computer screen folds multiple windows, spaces, images and temporalities on top of each other.



René Magritte, *L'Espoir Rapide*, 1928

The paintings of René Magritte could be seen to have prefigured many of the developments in image making that have come about since the advent of the computer screen. Often producing paintings that employ the Albertian perspective system, his spaces simultaneously exhibit transpositions and surface incongruities, lending his works a creeping sense of flatness that continually undermines their spatial integrity. Deploying effects such as transparencies, gradients and blushes, his ability to smoothly 'mask', 'layer' and 'clone' images brings to mind the manipulation of images commonly performed now using programmes like Photoshop. In 1928 he produced a number of map-like paintings comprised of vague suggestions of boundaries and blobs of form, among which were painted words like 'horizon', 'trees' or 'woman's body'. From these words and indistinct forms we are able to deduce various

types of scenes: a landscape, a nude looking in a mirror. Here Magritte points to the interchangeability of imagery within a picture. The surface of the painting in this sense becomes a kind of arbitrary and morphing topography, a stage set of multi-purpose props, stripped back to reveal the workings of a Unity-like gaming engine.



Unity 3D screenshot

The sense of flatness and artificiality that permeates Magritte's paintings also extends to their reproduction and distribution. His painting method emphasises the plasticity of his subjects, its smoothness and lack of visible brush marks lending it well to being captured by the lens, to appear in books and image searches online. This ability to make images seemingly flatten out across different media signals the increasing tendency of images to permeate multiple realms and platforms. This increased permeation and influence is referenced in his famous painting *The Betrayal of Images*, comprised of an image of a pipe underlined by the statement 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe', whereby a distinction is made between the surface of representation and the object in the world, as if to remind us that they are separate realms. Farocki's *Parallel*, however, signals that this relatively simple distinction is beginning

to become confused as new digital technologies produce images with the potential to integrate into our embodied 'physical' lives and our understanding of the world. As Anselm Franke writes, in response to *Parallel*:

*In the new mimetic paradigm of digital hyperrealism, reality is no longer the measure of the always imperfect image, but the image increasingly becomes the measure of an always imperfect reality.*‡

The digital algorithms that help to grow these computer-generated worlds here begin to exceed their confines behind the screen; their images become dominant cultural forms as ideal representations of form and space.

To a certain extent the idealised image is nothing new, particularly in painting. Yet the ability to clone images and algorithmically generate space on the screen can lead to a pervasive stylisation of images, with generic models being continuously repeated. How does one orientate oneself within or challenge the new reality that Franke describes? One way, perhaps, is to challenge such images through other modes of production such as painting as a means to draw, once again, on that inherently interrogative potential of the flattened, tactile surface image identified by Magritte as a means to betray the distinction between image and reality, however complex, slippery and intertwined that relationship has now become.

It would seem that the screen will continue to disseminate images of painting while painting will continue to adopt, extend and alter the screen's methods and tropes, making for an interesting feedback loop. The smoothing out and modelling of pictorial space made possible by the technology of oil paint, and the cropping, transposing, fracturing and gradating of space performed by paintings over the last

century are two identities of the medium that have been absorbed or reflected by the screen. Simultaneously, effects of the screen like modulated gesture and chromatic distortion, pixellation and blurring continue to find their way into painting. Perhaps it is a potential task of painting, or of any practice engaging with the screen, to put the vast outpouring of images generated and circulated by the screen to the test, in order to alert us to both the extraordinary symbioses and potential betrayals of the visible world that they may screen for us, and from us.

‡ Anselm Franke, *Animism*, Seoul: Ilmin Museum of Art, 2013, pp.138-9.

## Alex Ball

b.1985 in Northampton, UK  
Slade (MA Painting), 2012  
Lives and works in London

Alex Ball, co-curator of *Screen Space* and exhibiting artist, has become increasingly interested in the connection between tactile and optical perception. For the past year, he has focused on a series of experimental screenprints which elide the distinctions between texture, volume and flatness on two-dimensional surfaces, of which *Relief II* is an excellent example. These ideas have culminated in Ball's latest series of paintings, exhibited in *Screen Space*. Initially, Ball's process involves moulding sculptural objects from wax, paper or even paint itself. Carefully selected arrangements of these objects are photographed, painted or screenprinted. The resulting images incite us to engage our bodily imagination with respect to the represented object: to alternately 'hold' its weight, 'feel' its texture, or 'mould' its contours. Evidence of the hand of the artist that crafted these textures is virtualised into the image itself. In a tacit nod to the co-dependence of hand and eye in contemporary phones and tablets, Ball's haptic paintings are at once instantly familiar and unnerving.



Alex Ball *Relief II* 2014



## Gordon Cheung

b.1975 in London  
RCA (MA Painting), 2001  
Lives and works in London

Gordon Cheung's *Screw* series captures a sculptural treatment of newspaper in a two-dimensional plane. These indeterminate topographies are twisted, wrinkled and crumpled from copies of the *Financial Times* which are spray-painted, then ironed and collaged onto the canvas. They cannot be resolved straightforwardly as near or far, deep or shallow. The title of the series is humorous and ambiguous, alluding simultaneously to the abstract inequities of finance, a frustration with painting itself, and a literal description of their creative process. Tangible ripples and tears on the surface of the collaged paper, along with subtle transparencies revealing the newsprint underneath, undermine the illusionistic force of these works. It is difficult to see anything as purely abstract, so our vision persists in reading depths and textures into their smooth surface despite this evidence to the contrary.



## Ben Cove

b.1974 in Wiltshire, UK  
Goldsmiths (MFA Fine Art), 2008  
Lives and works in London

Ben Cove's hard-edged geometric motifs are drawn from a sizeable archive of architectural and design images. An interest in the construction of objects, histories and narratives – Cove trained as an architect – informs these thickly layered panel paintings. Like the late style of Le Corbusier's Ronchamp chapel, Cove's work is loaded with recognisable fragments of the built environment, 'visual phrases' quoted out of context. Yet these initially abstract elements come to life in trompe l'œil stage sets with faux bevelled frames, spurred on by anthropomorphic titles and deliberate inconsistencies in the figure-ground composition. Like architectural plans from the analogue past, Cove's paintings are simultaneously schematic and pictorial. Their existence as objects is also acknowledged, with the subtle textural relief of earlier layers left visible, and the panel edges painted in a continuum with the adjacent surface. Cove's near-abstract totemic forms compel us to project our own narratives and aspirations onto their shallow surfaces.



## Christopher Hanlon

b.1978 in Plymouth, UK  
RCA (MA Painting), 2008  
Lives and works in Belfast

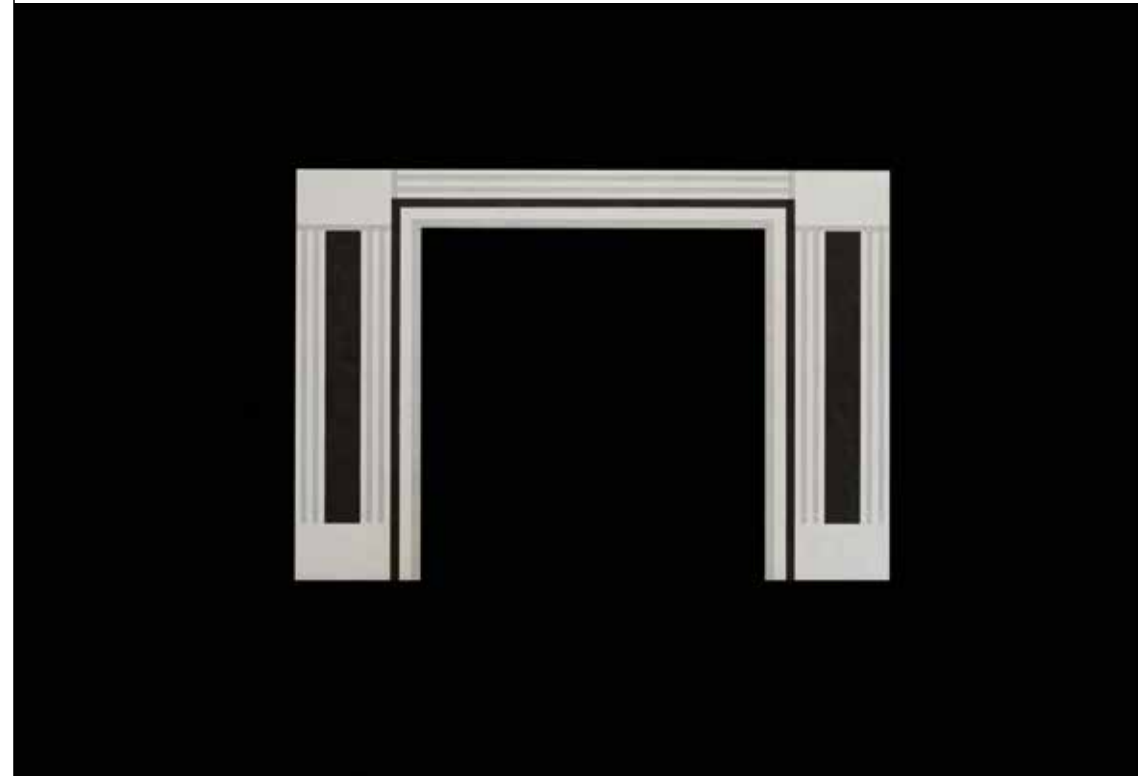
Christopher Hanlon's *Leaf* is a digital fragment captured in the medium of paint. The image comes from a composite of 3D mathematical models, forms which arise out of chaos, but can be recognised here as a group of leaves. The act of painting transforms the original abstraction, the 'impossible image', into a recognisable, tangible object. In other work, Hanlon investigates the treachery of images, how they can mask and conceal other spaces and other meanings. Starting with recognisable images, Hanlon experiments with how far they can be altered before they become unreadable. In contrast with many of the other works in *Screen Space*, these paintings are small and meticulously aged as if they themselves were fragments from another time. Hanlon creates deeply allegorical, monadic paintings by drawing a cracked curtain over the 'open window' of linear perspective.



## Thomas Hutton

b.1983 in London  
Yale University (MFA Sculpture), 2013  
Lives and works in Rome

Thomas Hutton's work addresses our perception of space by confusing the properties of objects and images. Image takes on the weight of an object, and in turn the object is flattened and dematerialised. For *Hearth*, Hutton applies lime stucco mixed with pigment to the Dibond support with a trowel. Once flattened into a smooth surface, the uneven density of pigment results in a marbling effect. Its forebears are found in John Soane's drawings for chimneypieces, intended for the Bank of England but likely never built. However, there is no shadowing or trompe l'œil in *Hearth*, putting it at odds with its surroundings, as if it had been edited into the installation after the fact. In this way, *Hearth* is simultaneously an image, a sculpture and a signifier of a chimneypiece. Hutton also anticipates the object's dissemination as a digital image. *Hearth* exists in a series, each version slightly different – in aspect ratio, tones of grey, and design characteristics – which are meant to disrupt their re-photography and coherence as digital images. Hutton currently resides in Rome to study its rich history of facade, surface and frontal architectural space.



## Christopher Page

b.1984 in London  
Yale University (MFA Painting), 2011  
Lives and works in London

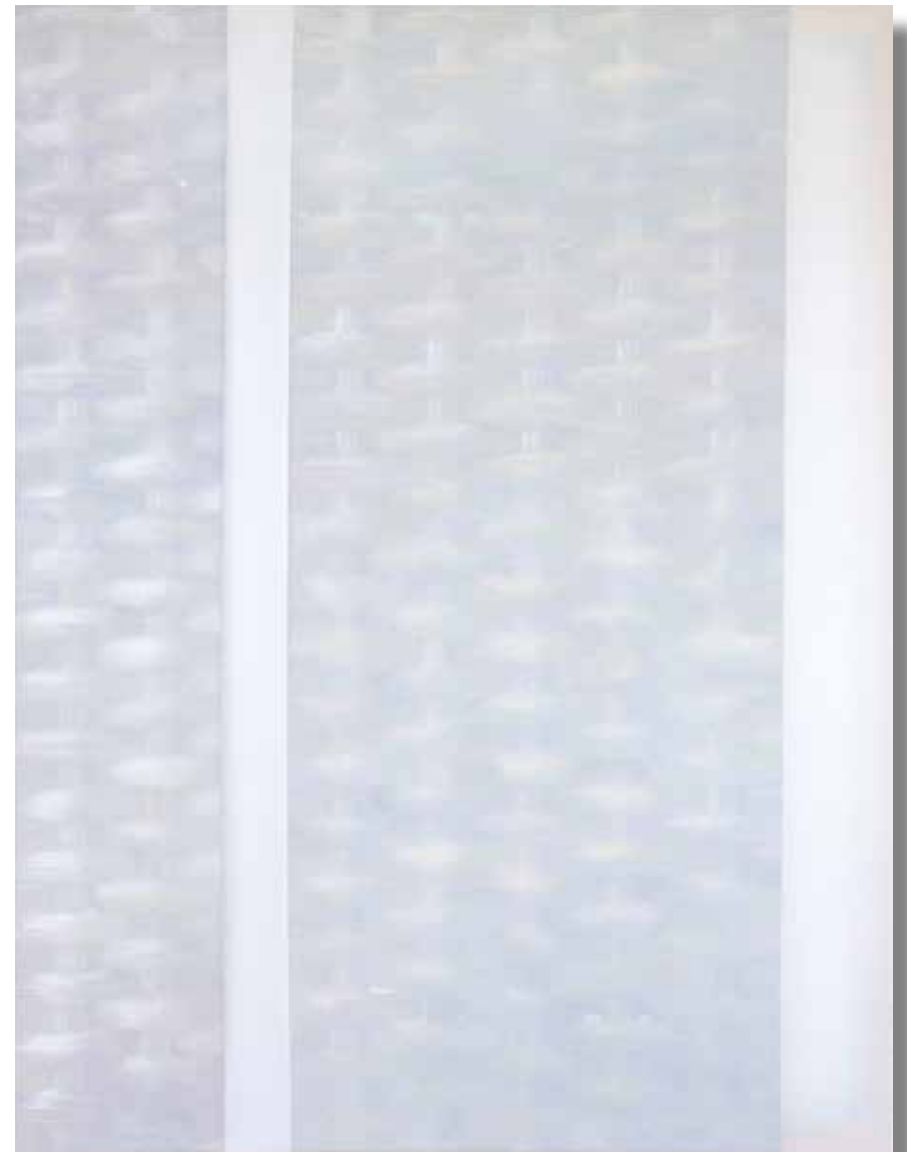
Christopher Page's lush, trompe l'œil renderings of frames and interiors are a complex play on the relation between space, surface and desire. *A Party in Seville* is composed of interior renders and design styles spliced and rearranged into a coherent painting. Despite its alluring, suspicious title, bodies are conspicuously absent from the space. We are shown the back wall of a room, drenched in the evening light of Andalusia, and a frosted glass screen obscuring our view into another interior space, just glimpsed through an open crack. Constituting a counterpoint to digital screens, these paintings dispense with their shallow planes as the viewer inevitably approaches the painted surface until the illusion recedes into the canvas. As Page's painting promises a 'beyond' which never materialises, it leaves us hanging in a space lacking both distance and intimacy. The generic sheen of desire found in lifestyle magazines and advertising is thus reflected and undermined as our bodies are reintroduced into the act of perception.



## Martine Poppe

b.1988 in Oslo  
Slade (MA Painting), 2013  
Lives and works in London

Martine Poppe's paintings unsettle the distinction between object and image. In her *Analogical Change* series, Poppe transcribes full-scale photographic prints through translucent sailcloth, with a series of regular, identical brushstrokes. Photography, the ultimate flattening medium, nevertheless retains a material reality, which emerges from these paintings like a bleached hologram. Not only is Poppe's view partly obscured by the sailcloth, but the photograph itself bends and warps, leaving some areas more out of focus than others. Poppe paints exactly what she sees through the fabric, so the sculptural properties of the print are translated onto the even surface of the painting. The title of the series refers to the process of language acquisition whereby existing rules of grammar are misused to create a new expression, which in turn becomes accepted as the new rule. The two works exhibited here also include interventions on the sailcloth surface itself, either the tight fold-over in *Analogical Change #28* or six parallel creases ironed into the fabric in *Analogical Change #35*. The wide range of foci, surface interventions, uneven reflections, and the stretcher left visible, all prod the viewer towards an embodied perception of these images as an object existing in space.



## Luke Rudolf

b.1977 in Surrey, UK  
Goldsmiths (MFA Fine Art), 2009  
Lives and works in London

Luke Rudolf's *Portrait No.38* is an arena for the confrontation between analogue and digital. A smooth colour gradient from magenta through cyan constitutes the painting's background, suggesting that technology – in this instance CMYK printing and processing software – now constitutes the primary, inescapable reference point for painting. After spray-painting the gradient, Rudolf applies broad gestural marks and drips in thin acrylic. The canvas is then photographed, and hard-edged geometric lines and shapes are carefully composed on computer. These are painted onto the canvas with expressionless brush marks, masking, layering and threading over the recent history of gestural marks which preceded them. We are left to fashion our own coherence in this cut-and-paste weave of modernist painting clichés, perspectival depths, expressive mark-making and fluorescent pigments.



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Alex Ball, *Relief II*, 2014

Aluminium and graphite powder on chalk gesso panel  
74 × 51 cm

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Financial newspaper and acrylic on canvas  
75 × 54 cm

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Acrylic on panel  
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160 × 120 cm

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Acrylic on canvas  
220 × 165 cm

Published by Slate Projects on the occasion of the exhibition

## SCREEN SPACE

30 September – 10 October 2014

The Pickle Factory, 13–14 The Oval, London E2 9DT

Curated by Alex Meurice and Alex Ball

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