

PRESS RELEASE

SAUL FLETCHER

25 MAY – 23 JUNE 2012

OPENING: THURSDAY 24 MAY, 6 – 8PM

'Saul Fletcher imagines another, stranger world... and in each of these oddly moving images, he stops time, then bends it like a magician.'
Vince Aletti, *Artforum*

For his second exhibition with Alison Jacques Gallery, in advance of his works being presented at the 30th Sao Paulo Biennale this autumn, Saul Fletcher has created a body of photographs that offer a glimpse into his psychological landscape. Fragments from the artist's life are pieced together through intimate images of installations meticulously constructed directly onto his studio wall. Fletcher transforms everyday objects into melancholic sculptures and integrates them within layers of flaking paint, as tender, almost hermetic compositions emerge through a surface that serves as both his canvas and stage.

The fragile and ephemeral state of Fletcher's subjects relay a sense of intimacy akin with that of a lost relic, whilst the modest scale of his photographs entice the viewer to peer into these extended metaphors. Remnants from previous arrangements are often partially concealed by paint and symbolic intricacies emerge on closer inspection. In one photograph, a suitcase formerly belonging to the artist's wife is suspended from the ceiling by sections of twine and a pink rag, perhaps offering an insight into a previous life on the road or referencing our innate desire to hoard and sentimentalize possessions. Fletcher always allows for ambiguity: are we to imagine the suitcase's contents or to assume that it is empty? The presentation of the form of a bicycle made from feathers, wood and wire in another image offers a compelling dialogue. The artist himself travels everywhere by bicycle but here, the stationary bike becomes enveloped by his fluid, metamorphosing wall.

A black-and-white photograph depicts a newspaper sculpture of a large North Sea Cod hanging on a studio wall adorned with string. The bloated fish is surrounded by painted symbols that include crucifixes and the Star of David. This religious iconography, combined with the glasses, vases and ornaments resting on shelves in another photograph, elucidate Fletcher's fascination with objects and symbols, and their personal resonances for each of us. Dark shadows are painted onto the surface behind the jugs and collectibles, making them seem more substantial and permanent. Fletcher's own particular form of photographic chiaroscuro is at its most compelling in a simple still-life of raw lamb, yellow celeriac and sprawling spinach, while in another image, withered, darkening cherry tree branches are the broken hands of a congealed clock-face. His placement of objects, handling of sepulchral light and the apparent ease with which he enchants us with found colour are understated but rich acknowledgements of the art of his predecessors.

Fletcher has also created eerily beautiful landscapes for this exhibition, which reveal not only his love for the Humber River but also his continued obsessive attention to detail even in the vastness of physical spaces beyond his studio. In these images of quarried stones and a working cement factory, specific social histories of each place are subtly acknowledged but never counter the inherent sense of time itself eroding in the natural landscape. A grey self-portrait in a tree above an abandoned brick factory, sits uneasily with an ominous Polaroid of the artist back in his studio – its incomplete emulsion creating a diagonal white edge as jagged as the ruined wall's surface and the holes in his clothes. In his images, Fletcher holds moments of motionlessness against a wall, or on the banks of a river, but his anguished mythmaking seems only truly redemptive through a sense of time passing.

Saul Fletcher (b.1967, Barton, UK). Important shows include *The Imminence of Poetics*, 30th Sao Paulo Biennale, curated by Luis Pérez-Oramas (2012, forthcoming); *Portrait of the Artist As...*, The Courtauld Institute of Art, London (2012, forthcoming); *Focal Points: Art and Photography*, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester (2012, forthcoming); *Spirit Level*, curated by Ugo Rondinone at Gladstone Gallery, NY (2012); *Painters Panting*, Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, GA (2012); CCS Bard Hessel Museum, NY (2011); *Saints and Sinners*, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, MA (2009); *Disappearances, Shadows and Illusions*, Miami Art Museum, FL (2008); *Rings of Saturn*, Tate Modern, London (2008); *Traum und Traum*, MUMOK, Vienna (2007) and the 4th Berlin Biennial (2006). His work is in numerous museum collections including The Arts Council Collection, London; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas; DESTE Foundation, Athens; Guggenheim, New York and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

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