

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hugh Scott-Douglas

Thank You Thank You Thank You Thank You Thank You Thank You

Blum & Poe, Tokyo

January 11-March 9, 2019

Opening reception: Friday, January 11, 6-8pm

What do the images of the planet look like when they are circulated by surplus producers? "...In most cases regarding lay usage, these images have not only been carefully edited in order to show generally positive examples of modern development, but they have also already been interpreted for viewers (or rather consumers), insofar as they have been packaged as pictures, but without typically offering access to location, date, ownership, legibility or other source information. In other words, the images seem hyper-legible, but in fact they are far from transparent or direct." (T.J. Demos, *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017)

Blum & Poe is pleased to present *Thank You Thank You Thank You Thank You Thank You Thank You Thank You*, New York-based artist Hugh Scott-Douglas's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery and his first at the Tokyo location. Scott-Douglas introduces two new bodies of work entitled *Natural History* and *Forms of Nature*, addressing symptoms of human impact on the natural environment and the sites of collective imagination that function to soothe and deny subsequent anxieties. In keeping with the rest of his practice, the artist works between digital and analog technologies that are both self-reflexive and responsive to their respective subjects. Scott-Douglas's last exhibition in Japan at the Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Art in 2016, marked what would become first in a lineage of thematic explorations of nature and its relationship to capitalism. This exhibition continues the conceptual arc as the third chapter, using the concept of the city to localize the elusive element of the collective imaginary that propels and sustains the difficult relationship of the natural environment with industry and capital.

The series *Natural History* is a group of printed paintings that originated as digital photographs capturing the peripheries of the wildlife dioramas of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, and specifically the Milstein Family Hall of Ocean Life. Opposite of the realities of the ocean, the museum's staged plastic environments promote idealized and fixed ecosystems that exist outside of the perilous reaches of human influence. Like the aerial perspective, the museological lens carries with it a history of colonialism and sells a certain scientific authority. These tableaux function as a sort of promissory note, presenting their viewers with a portal to this alternate and optimistic synthetic planet. Backed by the gold reserve of the institution, they offer a respite from and rebuttal to the reality of the ocean—a counter-narrative agreeably consumed by their public. Appropriating the protocols of the capitalist treatment of images, Scott-Douglas captures and processes these pseudoworlds with a succession of artificial intermediaries. Beginning with the glass barrier of the vitrine itself and the lens of the camera, the exercise continues with a digital photograph, the file then subjected to an algorithm that employs various effects to simulate those typical of a plastic body Leica. This is followed by digital transfer and digital printing, collaged with screentone plastic films that emulate the textures and shades of an analog four-color press print. This artifact is scanned and photocopied and finally printed in lay-

BLUM & POE

LOS ANGELES

NEW YORK

TOKYO

ers of ink and resin. This multi-tiered process culminates in representations of plastic worlds rendered via plastic technologies—handsome, passive scenes that appear as natural, techniques that simulate analog methods—abstractions of their source material and the realities of their referent environments.

Forms of Nature is a suite of collages that combines images from the *Wall Street Journal Magazine* with those of Paul Wolff's *Formen Des Lebens: Botanische Lichtbildstudien* (Forms of Life: Botanical Photo Studies) (Königstein im Taunus and Leipzig: Karl Robert Langewiesche, 1931). Wolff's book is a collection of photography of plant life native to his hometown of Muhlhausen, Germany, shot with his instrument of choice, the small-format Leica camera. In this new series, Scott-Douglas montages these delicate and intimate black and white compositions with the design strategy of the WSJ Magazine. As revenue in the printing industry declined, this quarterly magazine was launched in 2008, devoted primarily to advertisements and luxury goods. As a supplement to the traditionally business-centric newspaper, this publication represents the necessity to adapt or die. In *Forms of Nature*, representations of the natural world untainted by industry mesh with contemporary capitalist survival tactics, the organic sutured to the inorganic logic of culture, as realized via analog collage.

Hugh Scott-Douglas (b. 1988 in Cambridge, UK) lives and works in New York. Recent museum exhibitions include solo presentations at the Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Art, Tochigi Prefecture, Japan (2016) and the Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery, University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA (2015); and group shows at Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH (2014); Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, MA (2014); and Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, East Lansing, MI (2013). His work is represented in public and private collections internationally including the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada; Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, ME; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, East Lansing, MI; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; Pinault Collection, Venice, Italy; Sammlung Goetz, Munich, Germany; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA.