

Matthew Peers
Be-ThenChinge
Press Release

GAO is delighted to present *Be-ThenChinge*, an exhibition of recent work by London-based artist Matthew Peers. The show takes its name from the Medieval English noun for 'thinking/meditation,' and apart from being an oddly decorative, archaic word that Peers enjoys for its own awkwardness, it acts as a fitting descriptor for his process in which a range of images are distilled, concepts are given form and experiences are condensed into sculpture.

Most recently, Peers has developed a body of work in painted plaster and cement. The majority of these will be placed on a series of plinths and shown alongside a selection of Perspex-framed graphite drawings, composed over a backdrop made from the *Financial Times*. Their domestic proportions and shiny, reflective frames will cause viewers to see themselves inside the work, and as they are all hung together, high on the wall, they are first encountered as one single object instead of a sequence. However, compared to his sculptures, Peers considers the drawings to have a greater degree of individual movement, in so far as they can be more easily bought and resold as separate pieces, obliquely relating back to the subject matter of their background. In addition to sharing a collage-language of suns, leaves and initials, the drawings all share the guiding motif of a Gothic church window, whose constraints allow for a number of compositional variations. Peers considers Gothic architecture to be somewhat difficult to define, with a range of interpretations and no fixed historical or geographical nexus. Operating on several levels, the motif refers back to Peers' ongoing interest in the blurred line between utility and decoration, and subtly contextualises some of the articles collaged onto the international

Matthew Peers
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20 Jan - 13 Feb 2018

Opening reception:
7-9pm, Fri 19 Jan 2018

For any enquiries please contact
the gallery at info@gao.gallery



Matthew Peers, *Untitled*, 2017,
graphite on a page from the
Financial Times, 10 x 14 cm

newspaper. One such article is an email exchange, describing Peers' request to borrow a Dom Sylvester Houédard (DSH) 'Typestract' – a pioneering work of concrete poetry created on a typewriter – for the length of this exhibition. An extraordinary figure, DSH was a monk, priest and theologian who became an icon of the 1960's British counter-culture movement, because of his spiritual approach to art making. 'He's this trickster, this avant-garde anomaly,' says Peers, talking about his influence, 'making these weird *Typestracts* in an abbey in Gloucestershire. Initially they are quite formal and harsh, but then as you look at them they give way to these slippages: they're dense concentrations of time; all these compressions of feelings and reactions, layered up to produce these really beautiful, minimal works.' Even though the timescale meant it was not possible to borrow the *Typestracts*, Peers still wanted to include a reference to DSH in this exhibition; his work operates as an effective key to unpacking Peers' own sculptures.

The sculptures make up the core of the show, each containing an array of marks and materials. Both haptic and conceptual, they are satisfyingly hard to place, at times redolent of haphazard furniture or architectural dioramas. Peers revels in their awkward formlessness, enjoying the language that emerges from a process of improvisation. Through the use of culturally-loaded signifiers, he allows for a texture of conflated time to show up in the work; by stretching some characteristics along, and compressing others down, he changes the speed at which the sculptures are read. They collide fragments of personal history with the absurdity of our present day, and through their deft manipulation of materials, evoke any number of multi-layered narratives. Their success does not depend on presenting a sleek, polished object, or convincing an audience of any one single argument. The show delights in plurality, imperfection and farce, and is all the more human because of it.

Matthew Peers (b. 1991 in Manchester, UK) Graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art, London in 2014. Prev. solo shows this year include, '*Fish and Shrine Sculptures*,' at Troy Town Art Pottery, London; '*A Paper Cup Thinking Of a Cigarette*,' at Fat Relic, London. Prev. group shows this year include, '*Let's See Where Were We? In The Pit Of Despair*,' at De Ateliers, Amsterdam; '*That Continuous Thing, Artists and the Ceramics Studio, 1920 – Today*,' Tate St. Ives, St. Ives. This is his first solo exhibition with the gallery. He lives and works in London.