

EXHIBITION GUIDE 02/05/–11/08/2013

# MAT COLLISHAW

HAYALET GÖRÜNTÜ  
AFTERIMAGE

ARTER

## EXHIBITED WORKS

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2001

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2002/2013

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2001

**Whispering Weeds**

2011

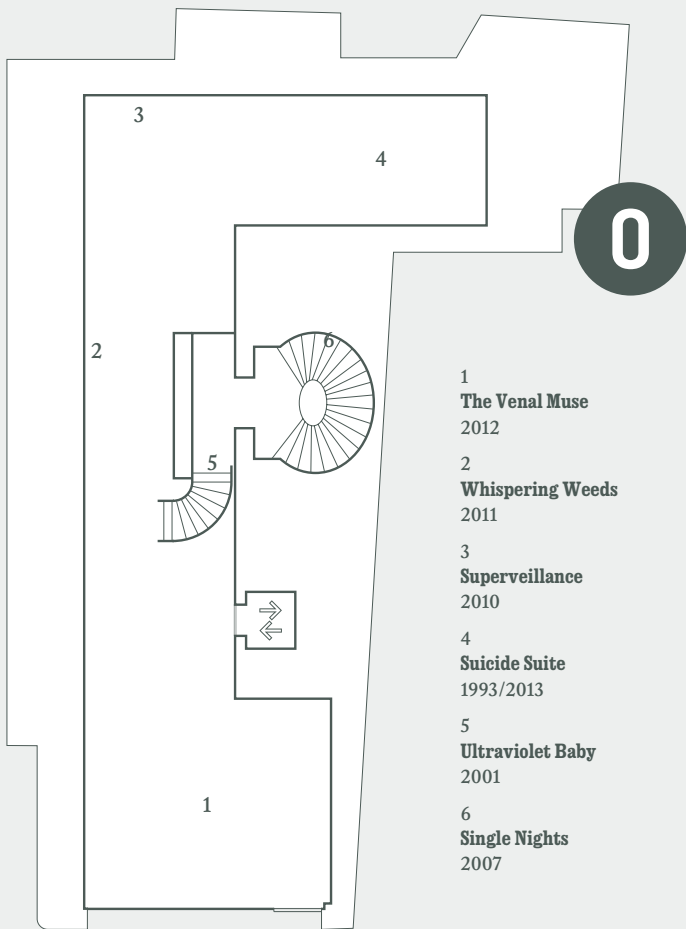
MAT COLLISHAW has been exploring the darker side of human nature by using the power of images in his artistic production, which spans a period of over 20 years. In his photographs, oil paintings, sculptures and installations he delicately brings together pain and beauty, loss and light, decay and innocence. Inspired by the potential for emotional manipulation inherent in the image, Collishaw's work employs beautiful, inviting and seductive images in order to tackle concepts such as despair, disease and evil. He often uses real images of disaster and suffering, or staged images related to these, producing attractive, fascinating and even hypnotic works that draw us in.

"Afterimage" presents a selection of Collishaw's works that form the myriad intersections of media, material and conceptual themes: his photographs, sculptures and installations that use light, surface and projection in unconventional ways. His work brings together all types of still and moving image production practices,

from old photographic techniques and equipment, such as the Daguerreotype, to LCD screens. Light, in Collishaw's work, is both something that draws focus to itself, and a medium used to direct focus upon other things. In addition to light sources such as UV lamps or scanner light, he often utilises stage tools such as flashers and spotlights.

"Afterimage" also features a new video installation ("Prize Crop") funded by the Vehbi Koç Foundation, which the artist has produced exclusively for this exhibition to be premiered at ARTER.

The exhibition takes its title from a term used to describe a specific optical illusion, whereby an image continues to exist even after the stimulation. In this sense, "Afterimage" could be thought of as a key concept in understanding Collishaw's visual approach and works.







**The Venal Muse (2012)****1**

These sculptures pay tribute to Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*, a book of poetry exploring themes of decadence and eroticism. On close inspection their fine petals have a flesh-like appearance, with anthropomorphic scars and sores pitting the skin. They might be seen as manifestations of corruption and sickness that often lie beneath the surface of beauty.

**Whispering Weeds (2011)****2**

This work is a computer-animated version of Albrecht Dürer's watercolour painting "Great Piece of Turf" (1503) with simulated wind. An almost insignificant collection of weeds, which despite their humble origins, display a very complex infinity of movement.

**Supervveillance (2010)****3**

Lithophanes became fashionable in Europe in the 18th century and had various uses, from windowpanes to candle shields. They are an ancient form of relief that involves the moulding of thin, translucent porcelain. The intended image can only be seen clearly when lit from behind. Where the porcelain is most thin it is brightest; where it is most thick it is darkest.

"Supervveillance" is a lithophane carved into Corian, a marble-like polymer. The image I used in this instance is of Bernini's marble sculpture "Ecstasy of Saint Teresa", where gold beams rain down be-



hind the Saint, seeming to incite in her a spiritual vision. Her visitation is almost sexual in nature, giving an intriguing ambiguity to the sculpture.

In the work, the mechanical light moves vertically behind the lithophane like a desktop scanner, imitating the beams in the Bernini original and momentarily transforming the inert surface of the Corian relief.

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**Suicide Suite (1993/2013)****4**

This is a form of sacrificial altar made from PVC curtains, wooden pallets and concrete paving slabs. The curtains are surrounded by small forensic pathology images of suicide victims, screwed to the wall. The work contains four 250 watt lights brightly illuminating what isn't there.

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**Ultraviolet Baby (2001)****5**

While using a toilet in Zurich ten years ago, I noticed I was bathed in ultraviolet light. The ultraviolet light, I later learnt, is deployed to make it impossible for intravenous drug users to locate their veins. A baby-change toilet then felt to me like a highly primitive zone where children have protective, glowing nappies and ultraviolet skin. It's as though they were somehow protected by the aura of a glowing light, not unlike the baby Jesus in certain nativity paintings.

**Single Nights (2007)****6**

Many single mothers live in the area around my former studio in Bethnal Green, East London. I photographed a number of women with their babies in the style of Georges de La Tour: intimate, romantic, and impoverished.

**Last Meal on Death Row (2010)****7**

This series of photographs depict the last meals of prisoners on death row prior to execution. This mundane collection of fast food and drinks is presented in the style of Dutch 17th century still life paintings, a genre designed to encourage reflection on the transience of life, the meaninglessness of earthly pursuits and the accumulation of wealth. They function as surrogate memorial portraits of the executed prisoners.

**Garden of Unearthly Delights (2009)****8**

Some Victorian fairy paintings contain sinister elements of violence contrasting with their otherwise enchanting and ethereal qualities. I borrowed some of these characters to perform in a three dimensional zoetrope, a modernised version of a 19th century animation device. As the machine rotates, an animated scene appears that is both compelling and unsavoury. The zoetrope's frenetic activity evokes the rush of adrenaline triggered by outbreaks of vicious behaviour.

**Children of a Lesser God (2007)****9**

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Many of the children who live near my old studio in Bethnal Green come from broken homes and wander the streets aimlessly, looking for opportunities to relieve their boredom and poverty. To exaggerate their feral nature I constructed a quasi-mythological scene, resembling the story of Romulus and Remus, using a contemporary setting to re-enact the ancient fable.

**Asylum (2001)****10**

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I filmed a number of Eastern European asylum seekers on a raft off the coast of Kent to resemble the pitiful survivors on the raft of the Medusa. This video is projected onto the back of a buoy used for securing boats at sea. The glass buoy is mounted on roughly hewn lumps of rock and filled with water, which distorts the image as you move around it. This has the effect of condensing the image into a vignette reminiscent of a ship-in-a-bottle.

**For Your Eyes Only (2010)****11**

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I slowed down the footage and sound of a pole dancer's performance and presented the work as a triptych, in an arrangement which evokes Christ and the two thieves being crucified. Pole dancing, designed to stimulate the viewer, becomes in this context an almost tortured performance, as the dancer writhes in a contorted manner in front of an impassive audience.

**Ganymede (2007)****12**

There are frequent stories in the media about disappearing children. It seems to stimulate a fascination with the mysterious nature of unexplained absence. Essentially this opens a space for people to conjecture and speculate about what might have happened.

After reading about another missing child I started work on “Ganymede”. I projected the video of a boy being snatched by an eagle onto smoke emitting from an old gothic font. As the smoke emerges and then wanes, the image of the child and his captor appear and disappear, compelling you to invent the visual information you are deprived of.

**Barbarossa (2002/2013)****13**

This work assumes the appearance of a slide projection. As the slides turn over in the carousel, they seem to melt and burn up under the light from the projector.

The photographs were taken from Operation Barbarossa, a military operation the Nazi army undertook during the Second World War, where many lives were lost due to the onslaught of fire or the bitter cold.

I projected the slides in a film projector and left them to melt and burn. I filmed this process and edited the footage to simulate a slide carousel projection, accompanied by the appropriate sound effects. The images are projected onto a piece of frosted glass extending in front of 1940s theatre spotlights. They appear as still photographs, frozen in time, or as an animated, burning frame of celluloid.

**Burnt Almonds (2000)****14**

“Burnt Almonds” is a series of works intended as contemporary Vanitas portraits, displaying the accumulation of wealth and the corruption of avarice.

Shortly after the end of the Second World War, Russian writer Konstantin Simonov described a grisly tableau of the decadence and debauchery indulged in by German officers. On entering a bunker in central Berlin, he witnessed the aftermath of a desperate last party of champagne, sex and cyanide. Aware of their imminent demise, the officers gorged on whatever earthly luxuries were available to them. They ate, drank and copulated, finally washing it all down with cyanide pills. “Burnt almonds” is said to be the smell left by cyanide.

**Deliverance (2008)****15**

I developed a technique of projecting glass slides onto walls coated with phosphorescent paint. The images are burnt onto the walls and linger for several minutes after each projection. As the last images fade on our retina a new one arrives to take its place.

For this work, I took photographs of children based on scenes from the Beslan siege in 2004. As the siege unfolded over three days, the media had time to set up outside the school and broadcast a constantly updated stream of images around the world.

It seems that witnessing humans in extreme distress stimulates our adrenalin levels. Perhaps it is a vicarious response to the intensity of this suffering that makes us feel more alive and alert. The media exploits this, feeding us a never-ending catalogue of disaster to devour.

**Island of the Dead (2008)****16**

The painting “The Isle of the Dead” by Arnold Böcklin depicts a melancholic scene with a group of rocks isolated by the sea. The island appears remote and inaccessible, like death itself.

I built a three dimensional map of the island using a computer program that describes the contours and topography of the island. I introduced a light source to imitate the sun that moves 360° around the island, taking three minutes to represent a 24-hour period, and throwing the island into light and shade as it does so. As the sun reaches the other side and the light fades, the picture recedes behind what is revealed to be two-way mirror and we are faced with just our own reflection.

**Kristallnacht (2002)****17**

In 1938, before the breakout of the Second World War, a pogrom took place against the Jewish community in Germany. The work “Kristallnacht” combines documentary photographs of the morning after this event with a mechanical device that causes the broken glass to subtly pulsate. These photographs depict the aftermath of an automated orgy of convulsive violence.

**Prize Crop (2013)****18**

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“Prize Crop” is a computer-animated version of photojournalist Kevin Carter’s famous Pulitzer-winning photograph. Taken during the 1993 famine in Sudan, the photograph became emblematic of the humanitarian crisis. However, it appears the child in the picture was actually never in any real danger and the image is in some senses mythological. It captures a very brief moment in time and preserves the tension of that moment infinitely.

# MAT COLLISHAW

Afterimage

02/05/–11/08/2013

Curator: Başak Doğa Temür

Mat Collishaw (b. 1966) is a key figure in the generation of British artists who emerged from Goldsmiths College in the late 1980s. He participated in “Freeze” (1988) and has exhibited widely internationally since his first solo exhibition in 1990. Recent solo exhibitions include “THIS IS NOT AN EXIT” (Blain | Southern, London, UK, 2013), “Crystal Gaze” (Raucci/Santamaria Gallery, Naples, Italy, 2012), “Vitacide” (Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, USA, 2012), “Magic Lantern” (Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK, 2010) and “Retrospectre” (British Film Institute, London, UK, 2010). Recent group exhibitions include “The Nature of the Beast” (The New Art Gallery Walsall, UK, 2013), “White Light/White Heat: Contemporary Artists & Glass” (Wallace Collection, London, UK, 2012), “About Caravaggio”, curated by Anna Imponente (Museo Tuscolano - Scuderie Aldobrandini, Frascati, Rome, Italy, 2012), “720” (as part of Ron Arad’s Curtain Call Project, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel, 2012), “Made in Britain – Contemporary Art from the British Council Collection” (Benaki Museum, Athens, Greece, 2012), “Out of Focus: Photography” (Saatchi Gallery, London, UK, 2012), “Otherworldly – Optical Delusions and Small Realities” (Museum of Arts and Design, New York, USA, 2012) and the 12th Istanbul Biennial (Istanbul, Turkey, 2011). Collishaw’s work is in several public collections including Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; Museum of Old and New Art, New South Wales and Tate, London.

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