

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Kelley Walker

Private View: 27 September, 2017, 6-8pm

Exhibition Dates: 28 September – 18 November, 2017

"I became interested in creating objects capable of perpetually remaking themselves, or allowing to be remade by participating in the culture industry". – K. Walker

Kelley Walker is interested in the way popular iconography is filtered and reinvented through time, and continuously recycled through private and public spheres. For the past two decades, his artistic project has been uniquely and handsomely accumulative, empirical, and serendipitous. Exhibiting the struggles and frictions between the analogue world he was born into (in 1969, in Columbus, Georgia) and the irruption of a digital realm that expands horizons as well as narrows perspectives, Walker's inimitable aesthetics are a palpable representation of the notion(s) of memory.

Seven years ago, in his first exhibition at the gallery, he premiered a series of works that re-shaped iconic advertisement magazine pages through the architectural software Rhino – which can rotate, dissect, puncture, and bend a form or image in any direction or shape imaginable. This idea culminated three years later in his epic, 196-panels, Volkswagen Beetle piece, currently on view at Tate Modern. Walker, this time, uses and re-uses imagery from his previous works, as well as from the infamous Calvin Klein 1980/81 ads campaigns featuring Jerry Hall and Brooke Shields.

"You want to know what comes between me and my Calvins? Nothing." – was the cheeky innuendo coming out of Shields' mouth. She was 15 at the time, and that started a huge controversy, even spurring a couple of TV outlets to ban the commercials. In 1980, of course, the Reagan administration was in its infancy, and the echoes and similarities between the zeitgeist then and the zeitgeist now - from the prevalent sense of false-optimism to the outright mobbish bigotry - are not lost in Walker's gaze, and certainly not on a personal level (coincidentally, Brooke Shields and Calvin Klein have just announced they are going to collaborate on a new campaign, 37 years later). Shields is no stranger to art world controversies either, remembering the scandal that Richard Prince's 'Spiritual America' caused in 2005, when he appropriated a photograph of the model at an even younger age.

It is this kind of defining coincidences and conjunctions that fascinates Walker – he calls them 'rimes', and he likes to embrace or instil them into his work. For example, a polished metal sculpture reproduces in 3D the curving shape of a screen-printed Pioneer turntable, scanned from a magazine double-spread ad, or when the screens used to make some of his previous works become works in their own right, accrued with collage and ink, or even when the stitching of jeans reappears on almost every single work in the exhibition, and further Calvin Klein campaigns images spring out throughout as torn fragments.

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Walker understands, and thrives on, the power of certain images – exactly like Andy Warhol did. Their fascination for human tragedy is mutual. But their aestheticization of the catastrophe is different: when Warhol exacerbates our most voyeuristic and fetichistic desires, Walker's prism is deeply personal, almost private – the way he dealt in his work with the very public crucifixion of Michael Jackson, or the tragic demise of Whitney Houston, for example. There is of course nothing really tragic in re-looking at these candid advertisements for jeans, but somehow, perhaps, a longing for an age of innocence?

As long as these images can be reproduced, filtered, transformed, regurgitated, edited, layered, disseminated, printed, scanned, emailed and re-cropped, and as soon as they penetrate Walker's own continuous and looping universe, there seems to be no end to his permanently self-reiventing imaginaire.

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Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am-6pm, Saturday 12pm-6pm or by appointment

Admission: Free

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Nearest Tube: Green Park or Piccadilly Circus