

franko b  
walead beshty  
pavel büchler  
toby christian  
corinne felgate  
peter fischli / david weiss  
alastair levy  
thomas qualmann  
jackson sprague

in  
the  
light  
of  
the  
overhead

a group exhibition curated by alastair levy in conjunction with post box gallery, 1508 and maitreyi maheshwari  
7 howick place, london, sw1p 1bb  
4th - 30th may 2012

## In the Light of the Overhead by Maitreyi Maheshwari

‘If you believe your world is formed by what you look at, and you just don’t look at the usual things, then your world will change.’(i)  
- John Baldessari

*In the light of the overhead* brings together the work of ten artists who seek to affect the way we look at the world around. Through a manipulation of everyday objects, embracing the effects of chance occurrences or foregrounding the processes by which the works were produced, these pieces redirect our gaze to take in things that are conventionally hidden, overlooked, or only acknowledged subconsciously. Often playful or exploratory, many of the works eschew the iconic or hierarchical associations of the work of art, focussing instead on the productive moment that led to its creation. But the use of the everyday objects in these artworks does not seek to impose new meanings on our reading of the world around us. Rather, it serves as a catalyst to our imaginations, inviting us to see the beauty and absurdity at their heart.

The work of Swiss duo Fischli and Weiss seems to ‘harness mediocrity’ and ‘actively resists aggrandisement’(ii), transforming, as it does, familiar objects and surroundings through childlike play and experimentation. Their work spanning film, sculpture, installation and photography explores the unspectacular actions and functional objects of the everyday using often pointless, deadpan configurations to amusingly absurd or slapstick effect. The home-video style footage of *Büsi (Kitty)* (2001) was first shown on the monumental screens of New York’s Times Square. The close-up of a cat lapping up a bowl of milk is both endearing and mesmerising as the viewer is invited to observe this familiar scene made uncanny by the change of context.

Alastair Levy’s series of stretched t-shirts, appropriated following chance encounters with a number of painter and decorators, draws attention to the accidental and the automatic. The marks on the t-shirts were made by chance through the splattering of paint, or unconsciously by the painter for example to wipe paint off his hands. The variety of colours is an index of someone else’s choices for decorating their home or workplace. In choosing the workwear of a painter decorator as an object for aesthetic consideration, Levy playfully examines the value and distinctions of labour between an artist and a painter. The physical labour in this case appears to be entirely the painter’s, as evidenced by the marks on his shirt, yet it is only through the artist’s intervention, mounting the t-shirt to resemble a conventional painting that we come to recognise and aesthetically value this activity.

The utility (or futility) of artistic labour also comes under examination in the work of Corinne Felgate. For Felgate, the traditional position of the artwork as ultimate luxury commodity by virtue of its high price and inherent uselessness is increasingly challenged in a world with a plethora of unique or exclusive consumer goods. Her work presents the contradictions of an exclusively designed garment that itself is a uniform: standardised in its form, utilitarian in its suitability for all occasions and necessary as a replacement for the artist’s now discarded clothes. The custom made dress has become an artwork brought into equivalence with other quotidian items, depersonalised and also depersonalising.

Toby Christian’s work methodically reconstructs the conditions for working with a life model. His series of works *Life Room* (2012) acknowledge the duration and discomfort inherent in the production of an artwork. The foam sheets positioned around the model are annotated with loosely sketched markings in charcoal to indicate the position that the model should return to again and again. Counter to our expectations, these draft images are not found objects retrieved from the studios and classes of other artists. Instead Christian has choreographed fictional poses on fresh sheets of foam, stained to give a patina of age and use. Much like the disjointed figures represented in these compositions, Christian’s foregrounding of these artist’s tools and support mechanisms deconstructs the creative process and reveals that which would conventionally remain invisible.

A representation of a prop from a live performance of the same name, Franko B’s *Don’t Leave Me This Way* (2010) features an image of an otherwise unremarkable chair embroidered onto a canvas in red thread. The live performance seeks to replicate the affect on the viewer produced while watching one of the artist’s blood-letting performances, replacing the shock of witnessing his wounds with choreographed lighting effects. The blindness and disorientation produced through the dazzling flashes of lights, and the retinal after-image of the artist sat naked on a raised chair through the performance, recalls processes of interrogation, torture and even death. The chair becomes an object of trauma that leaves an indelible trace both in the memory and subconscious of the viewer and on the canvas which is symbolically wounded by the red threads. The artist, too, is caught in the glare of this image; the physical process of sewing the work involves the artist working in the light of an overhead projector to follow the lines of the image, repeatedly moving from the front to the back of the canvas. The repetitive and obsessive nature of this process appears as the consequences of a traumatic encounter, which one cannot forget and so must be traced and re-traced.

The traces of a very different kind of blindness are evident in the photograms of Walead Beshty. His camera-less images are produced in the dark room, where the artist folds and exposes sheets of light sensitive paper to the spectrum of additive colours: cyan, magenta and yellow. Although the artist defines the parameters within which the works will be made (most often revealed in the detailed titles) the images themselves become the manifestation of chance. All photographic works are to some extent the product of chance procedures, made as they are using a mechanical device and relatively automated chemical or digital processing. The rules of the game as set by Beshty similarly force him to become another instrument in the process of making the work. Despite the physical performance involved, this aleatory process mitigates any sense of hierarchy inherent in the artist’s choice and intentionality. The photographic work in this case is not about the image or the traditional convention that such a picture should in some way describe the world around us. Rather, it complicates the flow and reproducibility of images by giving the otherwise ephemeral a specific material form.

Jackson Sprague’s work is also interested in disrupting conventions of image and object, drawing in particular on the relationship between wall-based objects and three-dimensional sculptural forms. Plaster columns, tablets and cones are frescoed with watercolour pigments daubed, sponged or stippled on while the plaster dries. The chance effects of the chemical changes that occur as both the

plaster and the paint dry are coupled here in these often vividly coloured works. These decorative surfaces serve to both seduce and disrupt the viewer’s reading of the objects, the forms of which are imprinted with textures of the mundane, everyday materials found in the artist’s studio that become part of the moulds.

Pavel Büchler often describes his own practice as ‘making nothing happen’(iii). Indeed, his work often takes the form of witty interventions using found materials rather than making objects. His series of works entitled *Short Stories* makes use of pencils found in public reference libraries, in this instance the Mitchell libraries in Glasgow and Sydney. ‘Büchler considers used pencils as tools, representing the creative hands they once belonged to’(iv). In drawing and erasing these discarded symbols of creativity so that they appear the same, Büchler is suggesting an equivalence between these geographically distant but nominally similar institutions, between erasure and addition, and object, image and text. The closed loop of erasure and re-drawing, circular text and object, produce a work that is aesthetically pure and purged of any excess content. The work takes on a tautological quality; much like a mathematical axiom, the work describes or performs itself, revealing its own truth in relation to the art object and its wider context.

Thomas Qualmann’s methodical drawings and animation seek to graphically map the geometric form of a cube as it rotates through 360°. In using the visual language of mathematics these meticulously made drawings and animations play with the way we read data and perceive movement and distortion. The purity and logic of the representations belie the handmade fragility of the drawings, which, as they continually repeat in the animations, reveal the in-creeper of chance and imperfection and thus a sense of humanity.

The works in this show bring up questions of the nature of art production and its relationship to the everyday. Often by opening up their work to chance procedures, the artist is able to withdraw from the production, no longer appearing to make anything ‘special and beyond the world of ordinary things’(v). Other works draw on everyday objects to produce deeper emotional affect or present the internal logic of an action or idea. By incorporating the imperfections of the everyday into the processes and gestures that make the work, these pieces are able to throw a fresh light on notions of beauty and the world around us.

(i) Marcia Tucker, ‘John Baldessari: Pursuing the Unpredictable’, 1981 in Margaret Iversen ed. Chance, London, Cambridge MA: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2010, p.139

(ii) Claire Bishop ‘Fischli & Weiss: Equilibres – Quiet Afternoon (1984-85)’, 2008, in Margaret Iversen ed. Chance, London, Cambridge MA: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2010, p.172

(iii) Sophie Raikes ‘Pavel Büchler – Northern Art Prize 2009’ at <http://www.northernartprize.org.uk/2009-prize/2009-shortlist/pavel-buchler>

(iv) ibid.

(v) George Brecht ‘Chance Imagery’, 1957 in Margaret Iversen ed. Chance, London, Cambridge MA: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2010, p.40





*Don't Leave Me This Way*, 2010  
Red cotton on canvas  
153cm x 153cm  
Courtesy the artist

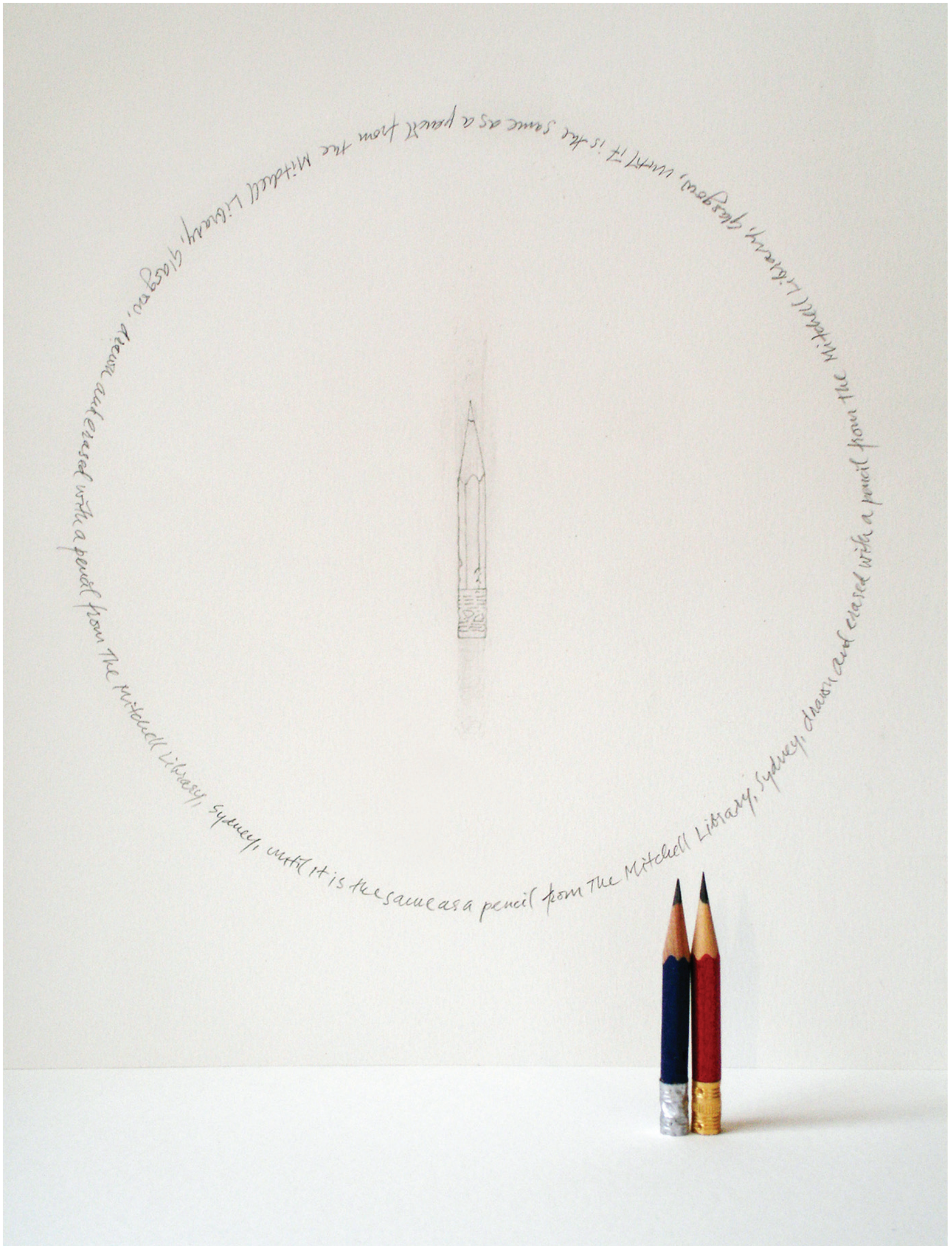




20" x 24" *color folds*, 2008  
Colour photographic paper  
50cm x 60cm  
Courtesy Theodore Fatsis

**Walead Beshty**





*Short Stories (The Mitchell Library)*, 2000  
 Drawing, 30.5cm x 30.5cm, and two found pencils, height 6.5 cm  
 Courtesy the artist

‘... a pencil from The Mitchell Library, Sydney, drawn and erased with a pencil from The Mitchell Library, Glasgow, until it is the same as a pencil from The Mitchell Library, Glasgow, drawn and erased with a pencil from The Mitchell Library, Sydney until it is the same as ...’

**Pavel Büchler**





*Life Room*, 2012  
Mixed media on treated foam  
81cm x 65cm x 4cm  
Courtesy the artist

**Toby Christian**





*Man I feel like a Woman (The Uniform Project) Toile, 2012*

Cotton on custom mannequin

Courtesy of the artist

In 2009 the artist sold all of her clothes and embarked on a process of creating the perfect, every occasion dress (the toile seen here). Since 2009, the artist has only owned and worn 7 identically cut dresses each in different colours/prints, which are remade on an annual basis as they become worn and need to be replaced.

**Corinne Felgate**





*Büsi (Kitty)*, 2001

DVD, Running time 6:30 min

Work courtesy the Zabłudowicz Collection

Images courtesy the artists and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich; Matthew Marks Gallery, New York; Sprüth Magers, Berlin/London

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**Peter Fischli / David Weiss**

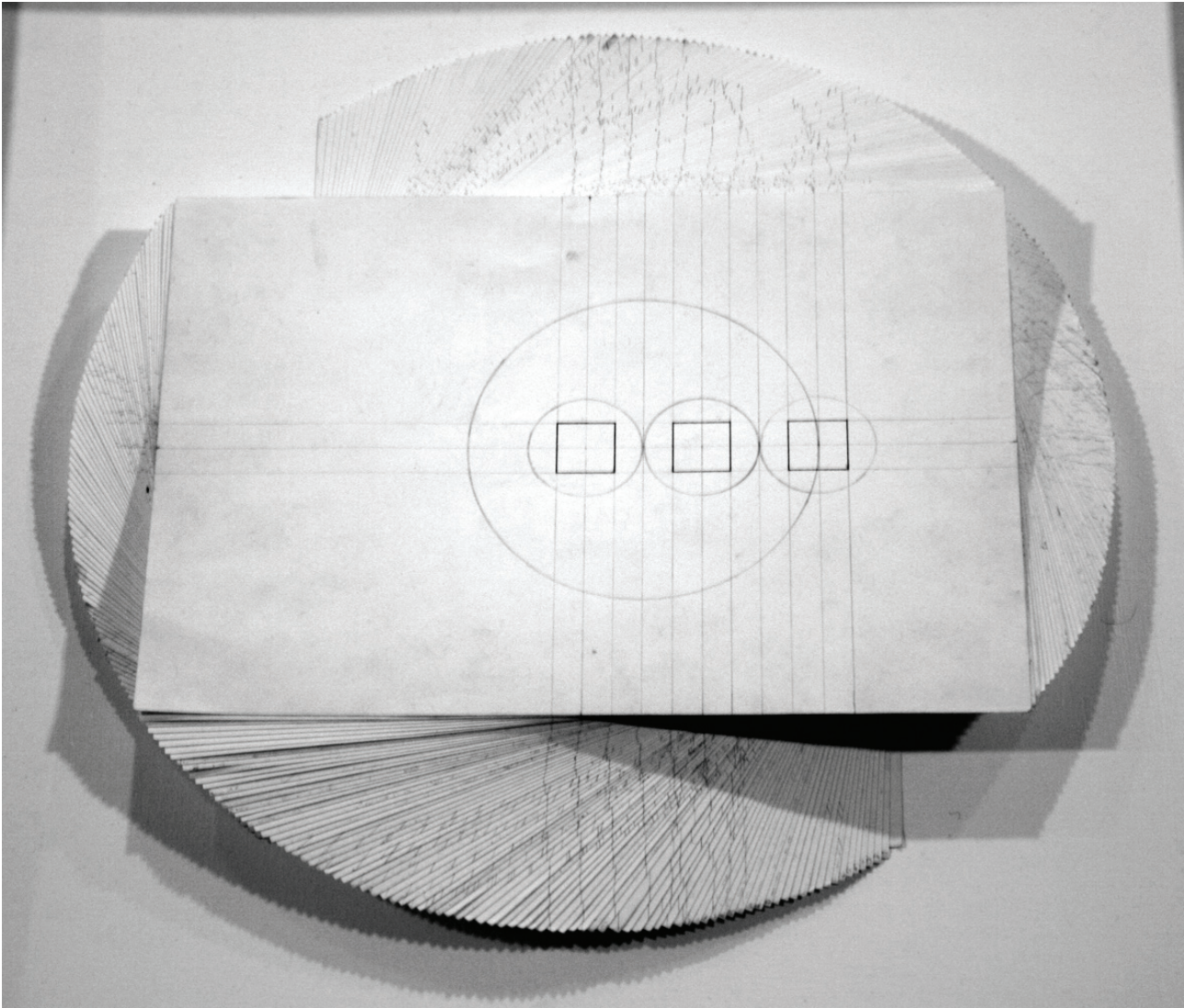




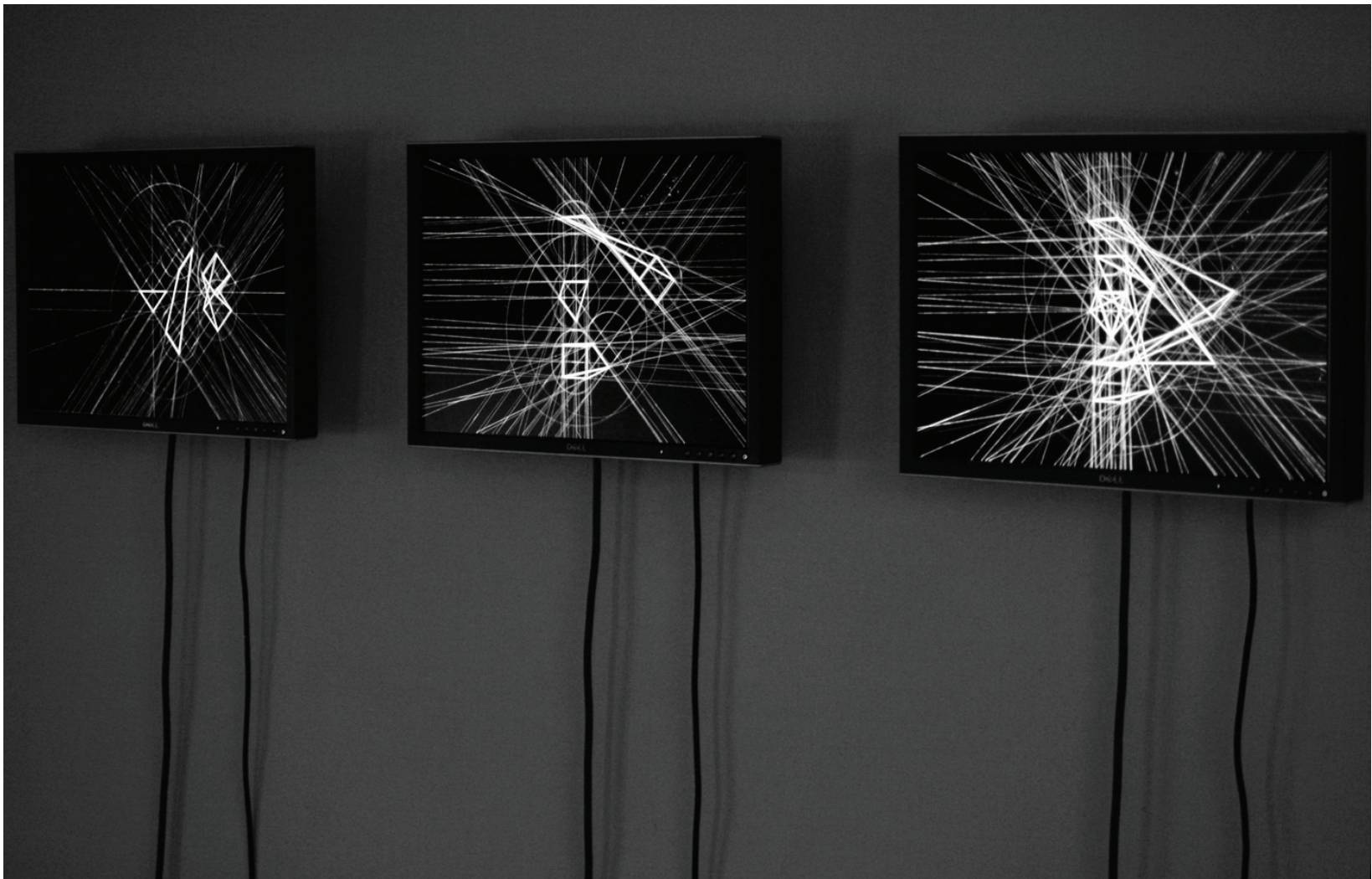
*Chris A #3, 2012*  
Painter and decorator's t-shirt on stretcher frame  
53cm x 43cm  
Courtesy the artist

**Alastair Levy**





*Drawings for Animation, Stacked*, 2010/11  
 Three stacks of drawings, each forming a circle 36.6 cm in diameter and approx. 6 cm high.  
 453 drawings in total, each 29.7 x 21 cm, pencil on paper.



*Reconfigured Cube (Versions 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3)*, 2010/11  
 Three animations made from pencil drawings [inverted]. Looped and synchronized.  
 Duration: 15 seconds. Dimensions variable.  
 Courtesy the artist.





*Blot*, 2011  
Crystacal and watercolour  
35cm x 35cm x 2.5cm  
Courtesy the artist

**Jackson Sprague**



## Biographies

**Franko B** has exhibited and performed widely, including at Tate Modern, ICA and South London Gallery. He has presented work internationally in Moscow, Zagreb, Mexico City, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Copenhagen, Madrid, Tate Liverpool, the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels and the Crawford Municipal Gallery in Cork. He has been the subject of four monographs, most recently, ‘I still love’ (Ed.FAM, Motta editore, 2010). His recent shows include Posizione e Deposizione – Franko B and Zhang Huan, Galleria Pack, Milan (2008), The Golden Age – Franko B, LipanjePuntin Arte Contemporanea, Rome (2008), Love in time of pain, at Globe Gallery, Newcastle (2009) and I still love at PAC, Milano (2010). He lives and works in London.

**Walead Beshty** has recently shown in I Think and That Is All That I Am, Thomas Duncan Gallery, Los Angeles (2012); Antidote 7, Galerie des Galeries, Paris (2011-12); The Boy Who Robbed You a Few Minutes Before Arriving at the Ball, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne (2011) and Walead Beshty – A Diagram of Forces, Malmo Konsthall, Malmo (2011). He lives and works in Los Angeles.

**Pavel Büchler** has recently shown in, among others, A Text is a Thing, Vistamare Gallery, Pescara (2012); Les Marques Aveugles, Centre d’Art Contemporain, Genève (2012); From Trash to Treasure, Kunsthalle zu Kiel (2012); Frames and Documents: Conceptualist Practices, Cisneros Fontanillas Art Foundation, Miami (2011); My Communism: TOP Contemporary Art Centre, Shanghai (2011) and Image to be projected until it vanishes, Museion Bolzano (2011). He lives in Manchester.

**Toby Christian** graduated from Wimbledon College of Art in 2007 and was included in 4 New Sensations, an exhibition of 20 graduates organised by the Saatchi Gallery and Channel 4. In 2008 he was included in ArtFutures 2008, held at the Bloomberg Space, London. He has since exhibited in numerous exhibitions internationally such as You Know I Know He Knows We Know at Aeroplastics Contemporary, Brussels (2008), Presque Rien II at Laure Genillard Gallery, London (2009), Psychedelia Paradise at EXPRMNTL Galerie, Toulouse (2009), Arsenal, Baró Galeria (2010), São Paulo, and Agora: Simultaneous I Instantaneous, Santander Cultural Centre, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2011). He lives and works in London.

**Corinne Felgate** studied linguistics at University College London, then later Fine Art at The Slade before completing an MA in Sculpture from Wimbledon College of Art in 2008. She has completed commissions for the National Gallery, Canada-UK Chamber of Commerce, MAC (Midlands Arts Centre), and Bethnal Green Town Hall Hotel & Apartments. Felgate is currently completing a year-long residency at the Florence Trust. In September 2012 she will be presenting a new, mass sculptural action at Tate Modern. Recent exhibitions include; Space Station Zsa Zsa at the Pumphouse Gallery, London (2011); Two Peacocks at Gallery North, Newcastle (2011); Their Wonderlands at MAC (Midlands Arts Centre), Birmingham (2011) and Circa 1960 at Guest Projects, London (2012). Felgate is currently supported by Arts Admin. She lives and works in London.

**Peter Fischli / David Weiss** began their collaboration in 1979. Recent shows include Lifelike, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA (2012); Different Strokes, Hard Hat, Geneva, Switzerland (2012); Hors Pistes, un autre mouvement des images, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2012); High Speed, Slow Motion, Waschhaus Kunstraum, Potsdam, Germany (2011) and Peter Fischli/David Weiss, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, USA (2011). They live and work in Zurich.

**Alastair Levy** graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2008. Recent shows include Subject/Matters at Galerie du Quai, Brussels (2012); Circa 1960 at Guest Projects, London (2012); The Geometry of the Object Being Plated at Trove, Birmingham (2011) and Definitely Not Untitled at Post Box Gallery, London (2011). His work is held by the Zabłudowicz Collection. He lives and works in London.

**Thomas Qualmann** studied at Winchester School of Art, Bath School of Art and Design and The Slade School of Fine Art. Recent exhibitions include: Reconfigured Cube - Watermans Centre, London (2011-2012); Anschlüssel: London/Berlin - Centre for Recent Drawing, London and Fruehsorge Contemporary Drawings, Berlin (2011/2012); A Quiet Geometry - Room Gallery, London (2011) and Not a Cube - Espaco Cabine, Lisbon (2009). He lives and works in London.

**Jackson Sprague** studied at Goldsmiths College and The Royal College of Art in London. Recent projects at: Horton Gallery, Berlin; The Courtauld Institute, London; the two Jonnys’ project space, London; Art Los Angeles Contemporary, L.A.; Hilary Crisp Gallery, London. Future exhibitions at: Plaza Plaza, London; The Nunnery, London. Awards include The Land Securities Studio Award 2011, The Cité des Arts Residency Award 2011, Conran Prize 2011 (shortlist). Collections include The David Roberts Art Foundation. He lives and works in London.

## Thanks

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