

CASEY KAPLAN

121 WEST 27TH STREET
NEW YORK NY 10001
TEL +1 212 645 7335
FAX +1 212 645 7835
WWW.CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM
INFO@CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM

Hugh Scott-Douglas

Spare the wrench

December 12, 2019 - January 18, 2020

Hugh Scott-Douglas presents “Spare the wrench”, an exhibition of new UV-cured ink and gesso photo transfers on canvas with resin, enamel, dye and avian netting. Expanding on ‘Trade Winds’, an ongoing series introduced in 2016, the artist returns to images created in service of the global shipping trade and its vast network of sea transport that exists all around us, perceptible or not. With a significant shift in his studio practice, Scott-Douglas introduces a newly developed process-based approach to material. Digital depictions of oceanic thoroughfares are traced and dismantled through a physical manipulation of form, abstracting the legibility of an efficient reproduction of industry.

Scott-Douglas borrows the exhibition’s title, “Spare the wrench,” from a loose reference to *monkeywrenching*, a term used to describe forms of sabotage often seen in anti-capitalistic eco-activism. Pulling from this notion of interference, rather than aligning with any overt political motivations, Scott-Douglas disrupts the legibility of the innocuous, hygienic images of our natural landscape that exist in support of the free market. Produced through the lens of FleetMon (a logistics-industry software that tracks areas of sea transport), images depicting hubs of traffic on the artist’s computer monitor are localized and captured with a screenshot. With the ships removed and graphemes of wave, current and wind directions in focus, the screen-grab is transmitted to a television set, resulting in a moiré effect. Scott-Douglas then captures the image on the television monitor using a small scanner. With an off-site industrial printer, the scanned images are printed onto the canvas in ink, layer by layer on separate substrates. A series of nebulous images emerge, resembling satellite views of the earth somewhere above land and water.

Transporting the printed files back to the studio, Scott-Douglas pursues new methods of production. For the first time, the artist physically enters his work by building up layers of resin, rubbing and kneading the material into the digital artifact. Visual effects that can be achieved through Photoshop are pursued manually. Acetone burns resemble erosion and silver gloss enamel shifts with light. Avian netting used for bird control purposes is pulled across each canvas, creating a grid that resembles rows and columns used by mapmakers to identify boundaries and measure geographic coordinates. As if underwater, air pockets billow across the monumentally-scaled compositions as a result of Scott-Douglas’ handling of the photo-transfer process, in which arrows and triangles symbolic of wind and wave directions are vigorously transferred from translucent plastic sheets onto collaged surfaces of ink and resin.

The mechanical and chance manipulations of the printing process in earlier “Trade Winds” works give way here to a heavier hand that subverts imagery. Each composition was previously based in the concealment of process and industry, not unlike the oft-invisible labor that drives worldwide commerce. In this new body of work, Scott-Douglas becomes a part of that labor and, in essence, a form of disruption. In an extension of classic darkroom processes, such as a photogram or contact print, in which the image is a result of a set of uncontrollable variables or the relationship between two sets of materials, Scott-Douglas teeters between control and lack thereof. Analog and digital means are not considered separate entities, for they run together in an off-stream process that recreates and reestablishes the properties of an image. In effect, Scott-Douglas monkey-wrenches the same meticulously planned and established industry routes, creating chaos where order once existed.

Hugh Scott-Douglas (b. 1988, Cambridge, UK) graduated from Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY (2005) and holds a BFA from Ontario College of Art and Design, Toronto, Canada (2010). Scott-Douglas has exhibited his work internationally, at venues such as Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Arts, Japan; the Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery at The University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA; Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH; Rennie Museum, Vancouver, Canada; Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA ; Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Germany; the MCA Chicago, Chicago, IL ; Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, AZ; MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA; and the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. The artist is included in collections such as the MCA Chicago, Chicago, IL; the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada; the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI; the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; and SFMOMA, San Francisco, CA. Scott-Douglas lives and works in New York.

“Spare the wrench” marks the artist’s second exhibition at Casey Kaplan, New York.