

Eoghan McTigue
The Image Screen
Kuttner Siebert Galerie, Berlin
By Wojciech Olejnik

Eoghan McTigue's exhibition *The Image Screen* at Kuttner Siebert Galerie in Berlin, is comprised of large, C-print photographs. Almost monochromatic, they seem to emit a feathery, bluish haze. Bare and elegant, the photos are reminiscent of modernist paintings. All of them but one present tightly focused exterior views of windows, where the glass has been blocked off by a white film of paint. The images are framed in such a way that it is difficult to gather any useful information about the hidden spaces behind the glass. Instead, one is left to confront the paint itself, which is covered by fractures and scrapes appearing more as marks or inscriptions in a foreign language. The edges of the cracking paint subtly buckle, while in other areas the paint is worn. Such details bring attention to its surface and consequently, to its materiality. In *The Image Screen #2* (2007) for example, this materiality, its withering surface (resembling a fresco), evidences the passage of time. However, what seems to matter more in these works is the overwhelming whiteness, not as a tabula rasa, but as an excessively oversaturated field of information. Here, the streaming data slowly clots the membrane of the screen from the inside. The viewer is denied access to the internal space (behind the screen), one only gets impressions, and the screen then becomes an open plane for projections. Similarly, an advertisement always presents a generic situation, which is always meant to be applicable to every consumer, in every circumstance. As a result, one receives just enough information to become engaged with the veiled, undisclosed content. In *The Image Screen #5*, (2007) the whole window is covered with a cracked shell of paint and the viewer's gaze follows these cracks across the image, connecting inexistent dots. One is free to overcode the content underneath, fashion it, create one's own narrative, like a voyeur, looking for something, even if it is not there.

Only in *The Image Screen #6*, (2007) is it possible to get a closer glimpse at the screen itself. This enormous image of an electronic display screen is in one to one scale with the real object (as is, in fact, the case with every image in the exhibition). It is fastened to the ceiling, unobtrusively mounted, with enough room to walk around it (as it literally 'screens' portions of the gallery space). In this work, the screen as the site of mediation is exposed to be a plain shoe-shelving unit composed of empty compartments, and not a surface made up of wiring and circuitry. No longer functioning, it brings forth connotations of empty sky scrapers and Venetian blinds; like a relic, unoccupied and silent: a grid.

With all of the works in this exhibition, McTigue's programmatic approach is evident. The photographs were produced using high-end printing techniques, ones commonly utilized for the manufacturing of commercial signs and billboards. As a result, the images take on a manufactured appearance, in which each is a prefabricated double of another; even the titles of the work only differ by number, not by name. The photographs are all created in the same way, shot directly head-on, with uniformly even, sharp focus. With no parallax or sense of depth, the geometry of right angles encases the image. For the window photographs in particular, each screen is always rigid: it is bound to the fixed window frame. This frame, aligned to the very edge of the photograph, stretches the screen across the picture plane. Visually, the window frame seems to float around the screen, or the screen seems to separate from the frame, but they are not easily perceivable together. This is, in part, caused by the large format of the photographs and the narrowness of the gallery. As a result, the frame acts as the limit between the image and the outside world; it enforces a straight jacket of hard edges and strong lines, the plane of unity and flat geometry. The limit is a relationship that is already present in the screen itself; it acts as a boundary between private and public space, between the internal and external. Conceptually, the conflict between the frame and the image cannot be compressed into the photograph; there is always an overabundance of information. One can only entirely read the frame or the image, but not both.

In *The Image Screen*, the screen is never merely a screening device, but creates a relationship between a sender and a receiver, one that is never fully functional. The screen itself is defective, while the images show how easily information falters, doubles, cannot fully pass over to the receiver. Staring at these images, interest in the unreliable transmissions eventually overtakes one's original curiosity about what is behind the screen. The urge is to fill-in the missing information (even rewrite the already-present information). Finally, the viewer becomes the sender.