

Jakub Dolejs

By James D. Campbell

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"The London Set" by Jakub Dolejs at Art Mûr Gallery (5826, rue St-Hubert, Montreal)

That a photographer's guile can make for a heady and instructive aesthetic experience is proved by the remarkable work of Jakub Dolejs. His ongoing practice of deception now encompasses some of the

formal language of late Modernism, and his palette is almost hallucinatory in its clarity.

Dolejs carries forwards his project of tracking his and our relationship with artworks by invoking Modernist tropes and the monochrome, and delights in undermining our commonplace assumptions about just what it is that we are seeing. His deliberate puncturing of his viewers' assumptive contexts lends his work subversive underpinnings and a dangerous perceptual edge. It is as though he was asking us to look at his photographs through an anamorphic polyprism - and the prism shows us the splintering of our own reflections staring right back at us in a very predatory way. The level of subterfuge here is at a very high level.

As adept a painter as he is a photographer, Dolejs has achieved an enviable reputation for performing some masterful and edifying pirouettes - everything from photographing a painted set to recreate Johann Zoffany's *The Tribuna of the Uffizi* (a painting of the northeast section of the Tribuna room in the Uffizi in Florence, Italy, 1772-1778) to recontextualizing Hogarth's *Marriage-à-la-mode* (1743-45) to commenting on Modernist design and architecture in *Moderne* (2004) and *Vista (Brasilia)* (2005). He has now moved more decisively into the realm of the contemporary.

In his new chromogenic prints, Dolejs constructs the work in an inordinately deft way, and frequently references those geometrics and monoterms that we have come to associate with critical late Modernist practice in painting. Wily conjuror that he is, he then proceeds, even when we tread most carefully through the minefield of deceits large and small that lay in wait there, to pull the proverbial rug out from under our feet. We plummet headlong into a liminal space that is also lived, measurable and real. In a strange way, he has much in common with the American photographer Sharon Core who is famous for her *Thiebaud* series (2003-2004), 18 photographic works that replicate Wayne Thiebaud's food paintings of the 1960s. They both build their

respective bodies of work from the ground floor on up. Certainly, they share a similar knack for formal invention, obsessiveness and devotion to the work at hand. And Dolejs' work continues to evolve. His 'Hall of Mirrors' is now multiplying beyond anything we have come to expect from him, and at breakneck speed. 🍁