

MICK FINCH
ENGRAMS

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Edition of 300

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THE PIPER GALLERY

18 Newman Street, London, W1T 1PE

Mick Finch: Artist Statement

‘Engrams’ can best be described as photo-reliefs. They layer up to three photographs into a single picture form, with sections cut through revealing the images beneath, coloured spaces or even the wall on which they are hanging. The photographs are predominantly of architectural forms and urban spaces, either taken by me or appropriated from images I have come across. The series began in January 2011 when I was an Abbey Fellow in Painting at the British School at Rome and my intention was to make a series of photo-collages utilising a variation of the relief structure I developed in a previous series of works entitled *Bare Life*. The compositional and organising impulses in these works refer to particular distinctions of montage and collage image relationships, in particular, the concept of ‘shock’ as found in Walter Benjamin’s writing and the idea of a ‘continuum’ flowing between images, peculiar to Aby Warburg’s thinking.

The relief form was manifested in layering images of places, displacements in time, overlapping histories and the contrasting sensations encountered in Rome into a daily studio practice. ‘Shock’ and ‘continuum’ relate respectively to Walter Benjamin and Aby Warburg’s methods in relation to photographic images and, in particular, in the *Passagenwerk* and the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. The pathos-formula of Warburg’s *Atlas* was a device he employed to map the evolution of gestures and signs; Benjamin’s *Passagenwerk* similarly used photographic juxtaposition as a means to explore genealogies of the Parisian arcades. ‘Engram’ refers to Warburg’s appropriation of a biochemical concept regarding the means by which memory traces are stored. Warburg used the notion of the engram as a way of figuring memory in relation to images. This capacity entails qualities of ‘trauma’ that I found to be material to the images I collected, therefore I subsequently integrated them into these reliefs whilst in Rome.

In *Engram 8*, two images are combined. The first was taken at the Villa Torlonia in Rome, an early 19th century neo-classical building designed by Valadier that was used, from the 1920s onwards, as Mussolini’s principle residence. The image was taken looking into a large cracked mirror in what *was* Mussolini’s dressing room. Holes are cut through this image to reveal the second image of bullhorn loudspeakers – part of the public address system at a Fascist rally, appropriated from propaganda footage of the time. One hole containing a section of the bullhorn image is raised up to be on the same plane as the contemporary image of the mirror. Another layer, closest to the spectator, frames the two photographic images. It is painted in chrome yellow, sampled from the colour of the wall in the dressing room image. A cross-shaped mark on the mirror echoes the cruciform structure supporting the bullhorns. A hole cut through all the layers creates an ‘empty’ black circle, echoing the bullhorns’ gaping mouths. The various displacements in space, such as in the image of the room as seen in the mirror, the displacements into the spaces of the relief itself, as well as the displacements in time, serve not to act as a commentary on Mussolini and the tragedy of the Italian Fascist period, but rather, they constitute an intertwining, an entanglement, an *entrelac* between how moments of a nominal ‘now’ and a ‘then’ displace and re-present themselves.

In Rome, I found myself often using reflections and shadows as a mechanism for displacement, creating two spaces simultaneously, which become further divided by punctures through the image and ultimately by the most frontal, ‘framing’ plane of the relief structure. *Engram 35* combines two images of the inside and outside of the *Basilica di San Lorenzo Fuori le Mura* in Rome. The interior depiction shows two of the Roman columns that comprise so much of the

collage of elements making up this 13th century church. In turn, a crisp shadow is cast upon the columns, the wall and windows behind. This image is cut through to another: an exterior view, looking from the Basilica towards *Via Tiburtina*, a place that is predominantly an aggregation of 20th century buildings. The foregrounded framing plane is cut to accentuate the interior space, echoing the relationship between the projected shadows and a nominal viewing point, and is painted light yellow, as is an angular shape, cut through both of the images, situated on the deepest plane of the relief. No commentary is intended. Rather, with the focus on the inside and outside of the Basilica, time is displaced, embroiled into the relief's structure.

So far, 43 reliefs have been made in this series. Other reliefs are comprised of images from Amsterdam, Brussels, Lodz and London. Each city suggests a different pictorial structure. *Engram 38* is made from two images shot in London. The foreground image is of the top of Guy's hospital tower at London Bridge, enshrouded in scaffolding and taken from the summit of the Shard. The next image is of a billboard poster in Waterloo. The poster is torn, a coupling of two images: one of a road, the other a portion of a woman modelling clothing. This image is, in itself, the displacement of two images into one plane. The top poster is torn away, revealing the poster below; a found image that is not so much the product of collage, but rather of *décollage* (ungluing or taking off). This secondary image, in itself displaced in space, is further removed into the structure of the relief. As the deepest image in the relief, its frontal qualities play between the literal depth of the layer, the plane of the image and the space depicted in the image. It simultaneously operates as a near and far space. The near layer, occupied by the image of scaffolding, is nominally a distant space, yet functions as a foreground space,

with the grid of the scaffold enshrouding the building and filling the picture plane. The frontal framing layer is painted blue, sampled from a tone from the image of the poster. It has a rectilinear shape cut into it, axonometric in character, that alternates between functioning as a flattening device and also pulling the eye into the depicted spatial matrix of the relief.

The framing layer of each relief operates differently, depending on the demands of the images it contains and the manner by which they are integrated as pierced layers. *Engram 27*, a relief rooted in London, uses an image of the shadow cast upon a wall by my studio's windows. Squares are cut into this image, revealing either the layer of an image depicting a brick wall in Bethnal Green, or else the literal wall behind. The window shadow oscillates as being read as the window itself, or as a grid. The cut squares redouble this relationship, being echoed in the crenelated shape cut into the near foreground layer. Window, frame and grid are intertwined with different modes of wall; depicted and actual.

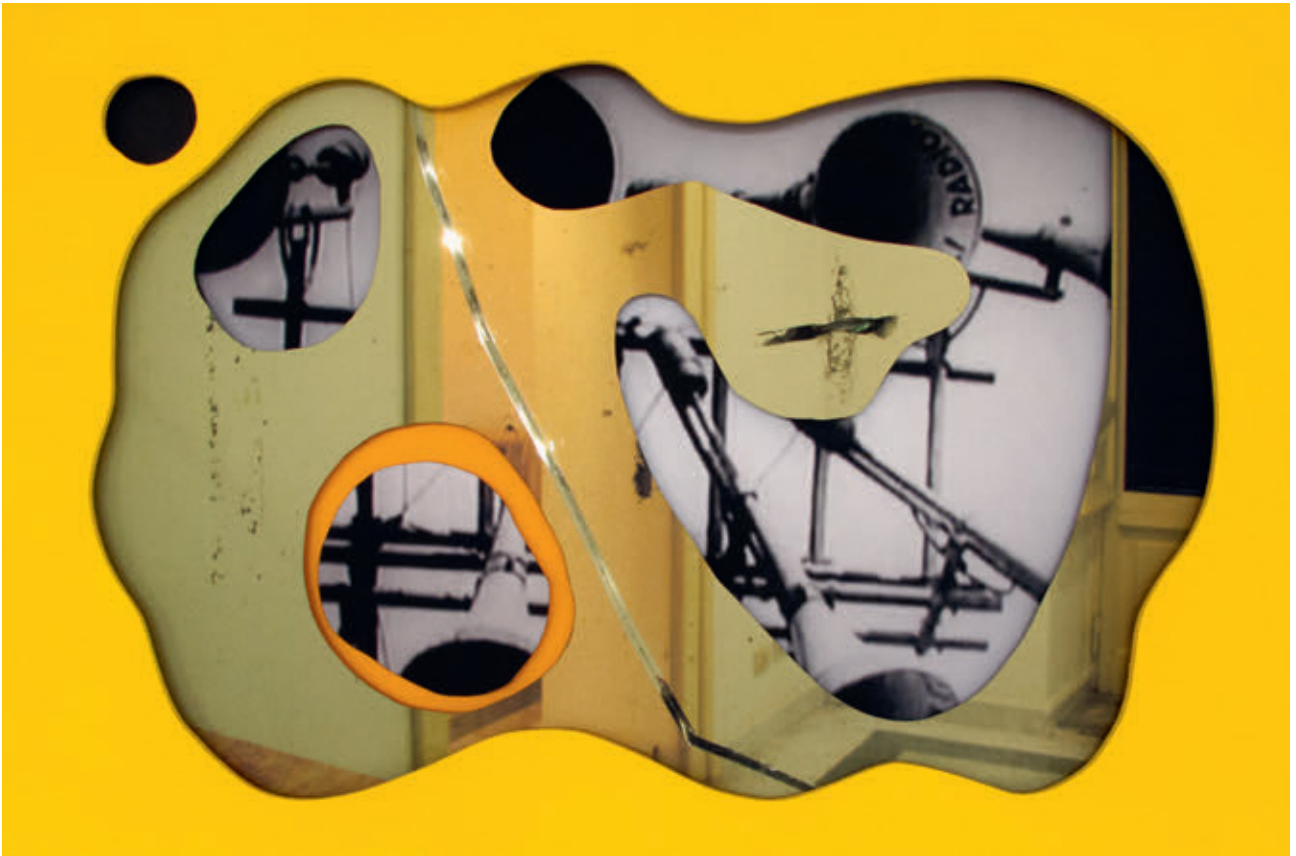
In all of the *Engram* works, the apparatus of the relief structure serves to activate a dialogue between the images. Between their spaces, their temporality and their histories. They are entangled interstices and do not aim to reduce the components into a single entity or image, but instead seek to render an ebb and flow of readings.

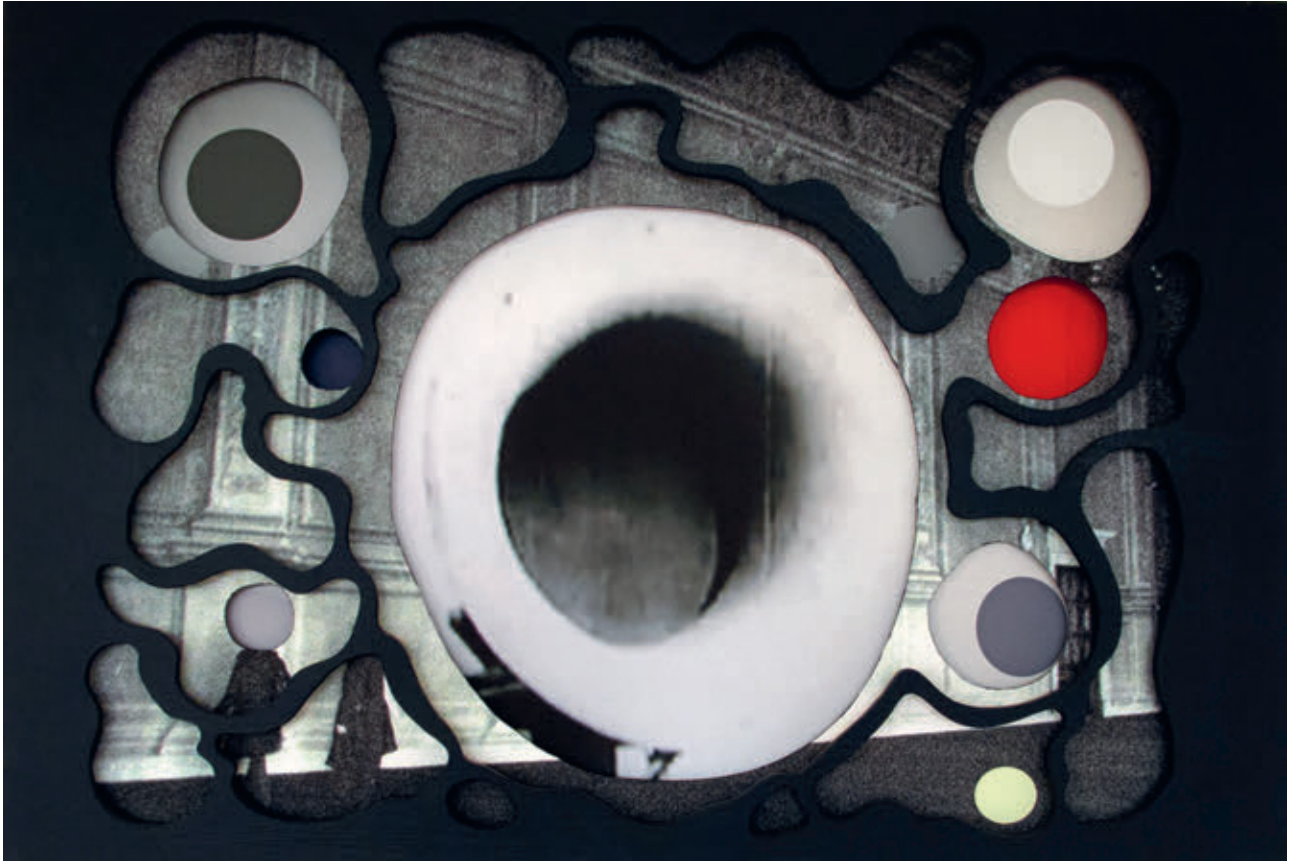
All of the reliefs are 60 x 40 cm in the horizontal and vertical dimensions. Their depths vary between four and six cm, depending upon how many layers are combined. They are generally 60 x 40 cm, as this is the largest image that can be derived from the digital Canon G12 camera I carry with me. The images are processed in Photoshop, the hardcopy output being generated from an Epsom plotter onto either photo rag

or watercolour paper using archival inks. The relief's layers are planned and composed in Photoshop to gauge what a cut will reveal from a successive layer. However, the images are cut by hand and much improvisation and accident determine the final result. 6mm MDF wood supports the images and the frontal framing layer. Each layer of MDF is sealed to preserve the archival integrity of the structure.

A major contributing factor in the making of the *Engrams* series has been the Tableau Project that I began in 2010. This has been a series of symposia and exhibitions that address the question of the tableau form as a more comprehensive way of discussing and imagining pictorial forms than those pertaining to categories of medium, in particular painting and photography. I have used the word 'relief' throughout these notes to describe the basic generic form of the *Engram* series. However, I think of them most specifically as tableaux. As the French artist, Christian Bonnefoi, said, "A conception of the *tableau* as modality of the plane, time and the invisible substitutes for the conception of painting as an art of surface, space and the visible."

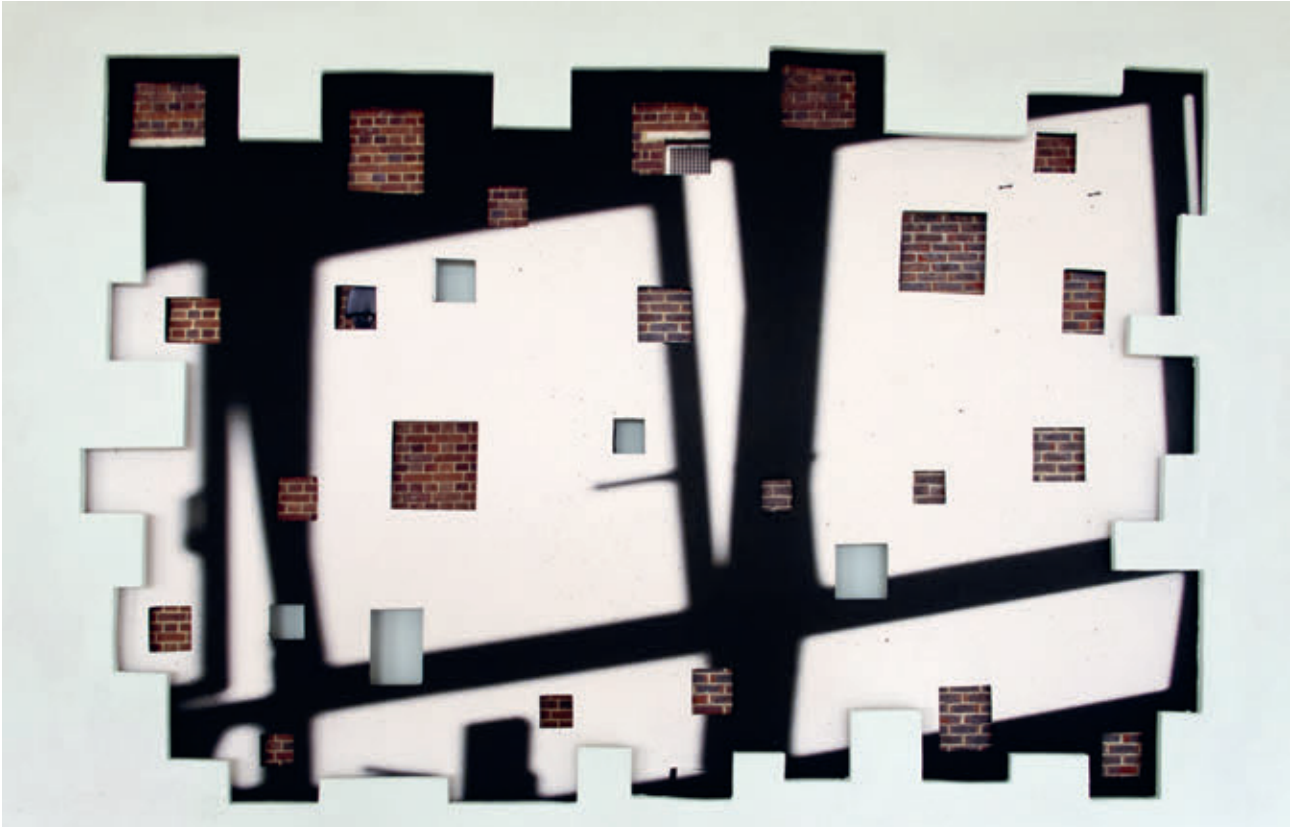
August 2013

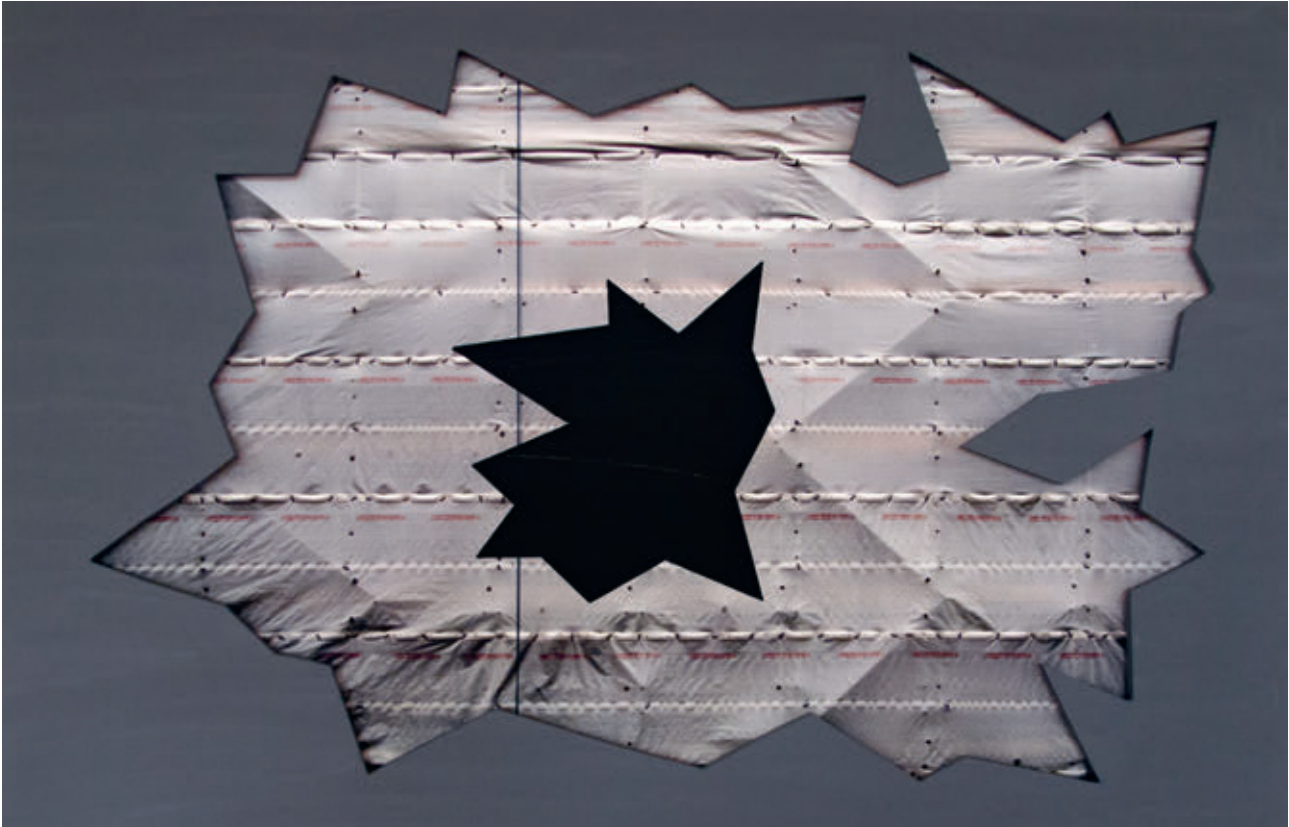


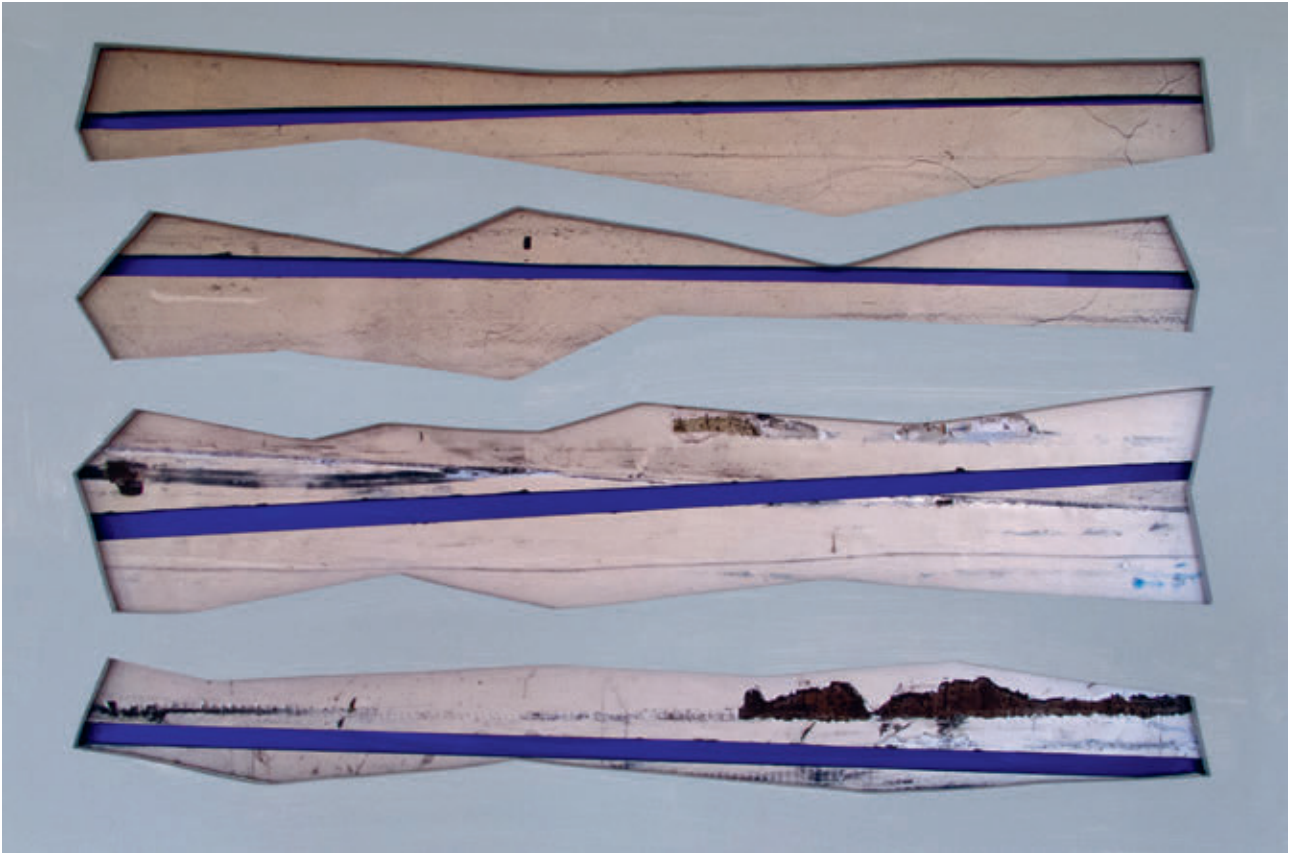




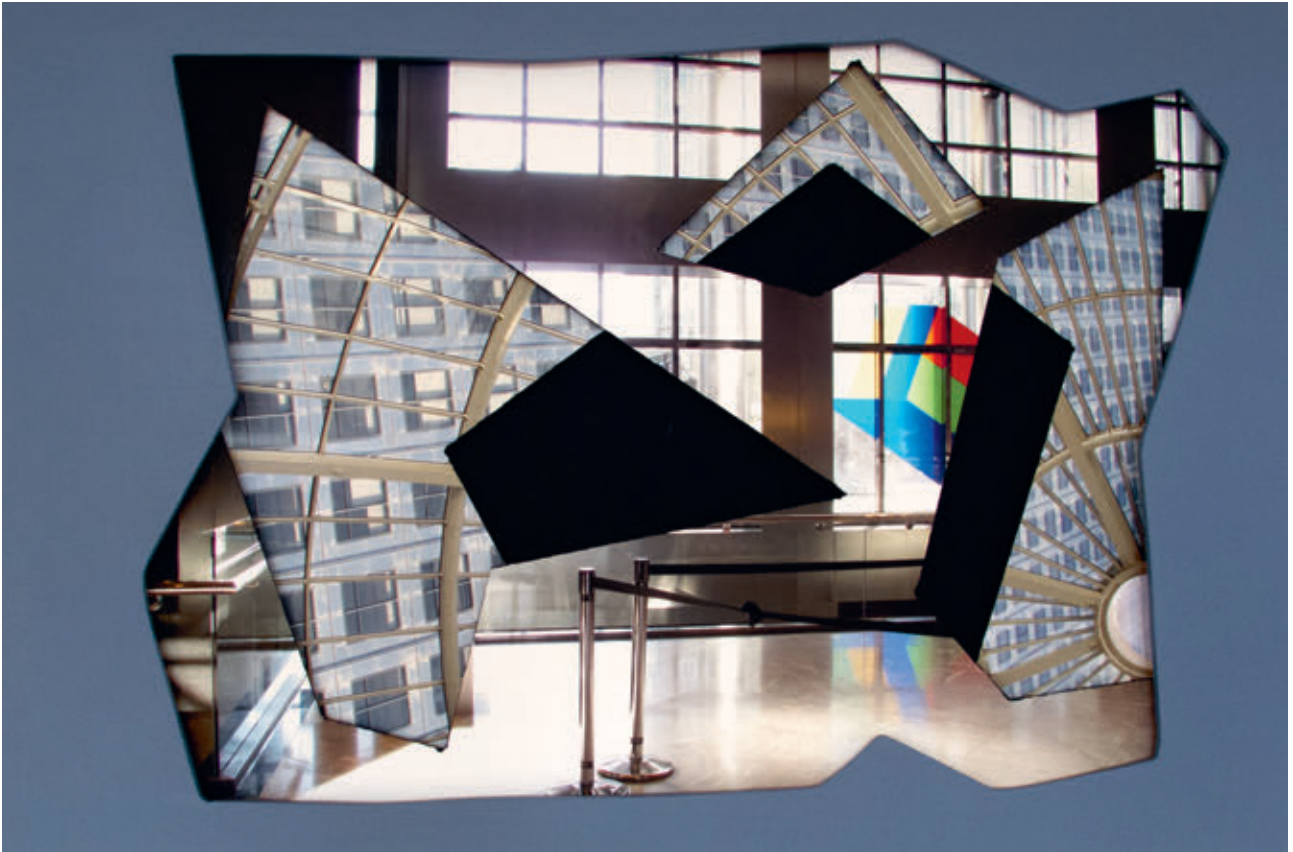




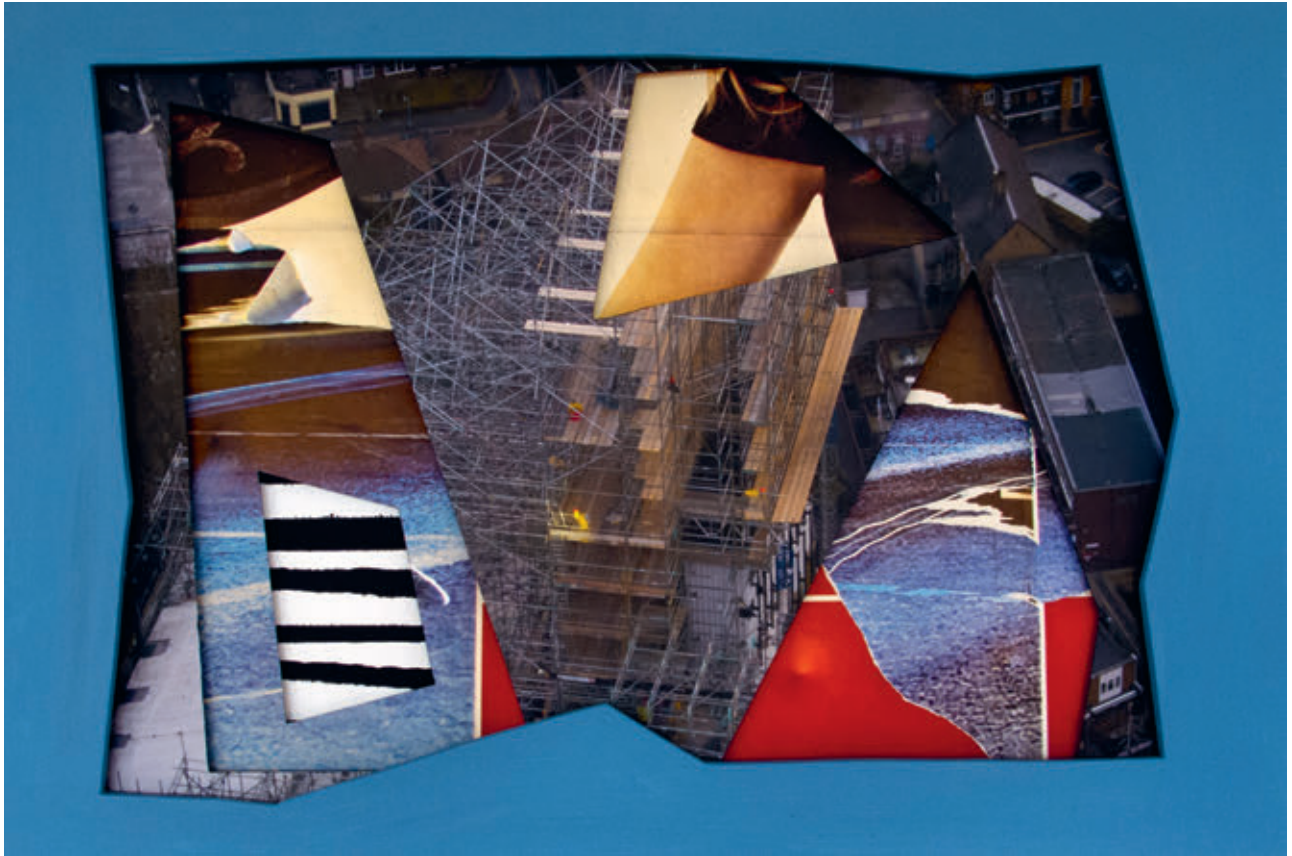


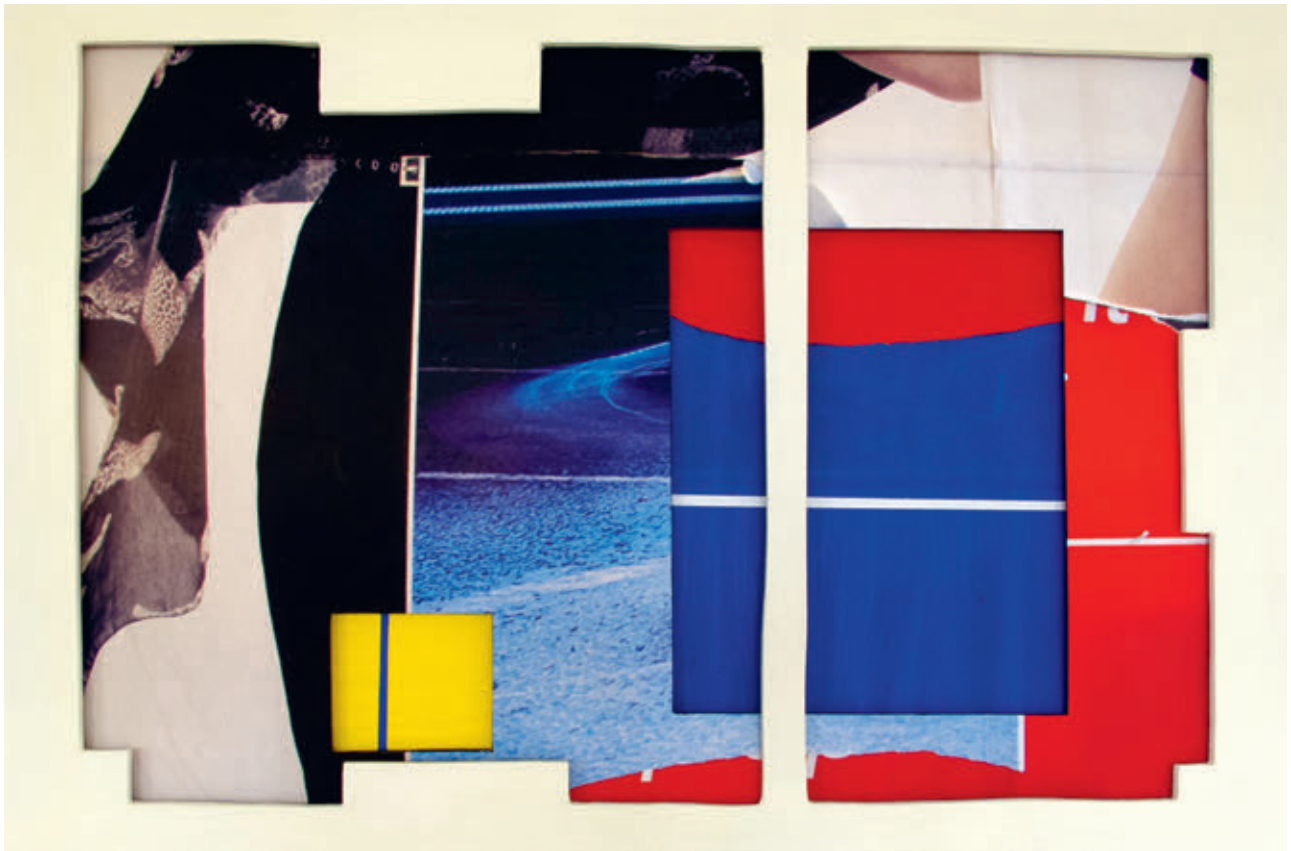












MICK FINCH

Born in 1957. Lives and works in London.

EDUCATION

1982-85 Royal College of Art, London, MA (Fine Art) Painting
1976-80 Ravensbourne College of Art, BA hons (Fine Art) Painting

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2013 *Dirty Pop, & Model*, Leeds *

2013 *With Torch and Spear : Constructing Collge*, Winchester School of Art Gallery *

2012 *Picture/Tableau/Screen*, Herbert Read Gallery, Canterbury *

2011 *The Beach and the Pavement*, Paradise Row, London *

2011 *The Producers*, The British School at Rome, Rome *

2010 *Bare Life*, Tableaux 2009-10, LAS Galerie, Paris

2008 *Taken As Read*, Moments/Christian Aubert, Paris

2008 *Trisquare – Closer Than You Think*, peintures 1996-98, LAS Galerie, Paris

2007 *Point de fuite/Vanishing Point*, Gallery 33, Berlin

2007 *Doubleuse*, The Nunnery, London *

2006 *Prosopopoeia*, Gallery 33, Berlin

2006 *Mickey dans tous ses états*, Artcurial, Paris *

2006 *Abstract Mode*, Fosterart, London *

2005 *Nevermind*, Galerie Pitch, Paris, France

2005 *Sublimey 1*, Galerie Pitch, Paris

2005 *Mythomania*, The Metropole, Folkestone, England and Le Lieu d'Art & Action Contemporaine, Dunkerque, France *

2003 *L'art dans ses passages/Ce que porte la peinture*, Galerie Pitch, Paris *

2001 *Appellation d'origine non contolée*, Maison de la culture d'Amiens/Espace culturel François-Mitterand, Beauvais *

2000 *Tableaux: 1998 - 2000*, Gallery éof, Paris

2000 *Le pays où le ciel est toujours bleu*, 20 rue des Curés, Orleans *

2000 *The Wreck of Hope*, The Nunnery, London *

1999 *Du côté du tableau II*,Galerie le Carré, Lille *

1998 *Plus près que vous ne le croyiez*, Gallery Art & Patrimoine, Paris

1998 *Tech*, Gallerie éof, Paris and Jason & Rhodes Gallery, London *

- 1998 *Suface*, Art & Patrimoine, Paris *
- 1998 *Closer Than You Think 2*, Le Carré, Lille, France
- 1997 *Push*, Galerie éof, Paris *

* Denotes a group exhibition

AWARDS

- 2003 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant
- 1985 The Unilever Award
- 1985 The Unilever Purchase Prize
- 1985 The Burston Award
- 1982 The Milner Kite Award
- 1976 The Wiggins Teape Award

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

- The Royal Mint Collection
- Deutsche Bank
- Nelson & Hirst
- Fonds Regional d'Art Contemporain d'Ile de France
- Colas Collection
- Peterborough City Gallery
- Unilever
- Neville Burston
- County Nat West
- The Groucho Club
- BDO Binder Hamlyn
- The Circle Limited Partnership, London
- TI Group PLC
- The Royal College of Art

CATALOGUE

Dimensions show height x length x depth

All works are courtesy of the artist

p. 6 Engram 8 (2011)
Archival digital photo media and acrylic on wood
60 x 40 x 5.5 cm

p. 7 Engram 20 (2012)
Archival digital photo media and acrylic on wood
60 x 40 x 5.5 cm

p. 8 Engram 22 (2012)
Archival digital photo media and acrylic on wood
60 x 40 x 5.5 cm

p. 9 Engram 26 (2012)
Archival digital photo media and acrylic on wood
60 x 40 x 5.5 cm

p. 10 Engram 27 (2012)
Archival digital photo media and acrylic on wood
60 x 40 x 5.5 cm

p. 11 Engram 33 (2013)
Archival digital photo media and acrylic on wood
60 x 40 x 5.5 cm

p. 12 Engram 34 (2013)
Archival digital photo media and acrylic on wood
60 x 40 x 5.5 cm

p. 13 Engram 35 (2013)
Archival digital photo media and acrylic on wood
60 x 40 x 5.5 cm

p. 14 Engram 36 (2013)
Archival digital photo media and acrylic on wood
60 x 40 x 5.5 cm

p. 15 Engram 37 (2013)
Archival digital photo media and acrylic on wood
60 x 40 x 5.5 cm

p. 16 Engram 38 (2013)
Archival digital photo media and acrylic on wood
60 x 40 x 5.5 cm

p. 17 Engram 39 (2013)
Archival digital photo media and acrylic on wood
60 x 40 x 5.5 cm