

Paul Hosking

Door in the Wall

Opening, 31st August 2023, 6 – 8 pm
Exhibition, 1st September – 18th November 2023

Paul Hosking, born in Plymouth in 1976, is a British mixed-media artist who was formally educated at the Plymouth College of Art and Design as well as London's renowned Goldsmith College. Over the course of his career, reflective surfaces have become the primary medium of his work. As an advocate of brilliance, colour, and pattern, he works with these visual components whilst maintaining a firm grasp on how those viewing his work would perceive it from the perspective of their own surroundings. Put another way, Hosking's dazzling works not only encompass the atmosphere of the viewers' surroundings – but they actually energise their physical and mental presence.

Reflection and repetition are two central motifs in Hosking's work. As the artist plans out an approach to a new work, meticulously combining manual and digital elements, both motifs are already influencing his creative process right from the beginning. In particular, Hosking likes to play with various repeating patterns which will define the content of the work. One of the most familiar patterns he works with is the chain-link fence. Hosking often incorporates this distinctive grid into the mirrored surfaces of his works, creating a "fenced-in" effect that can be perceived on multiple levels.

The work Horizon (Yellow) for example, consists of several rectangular mirrors that are coupled to each other horizontally. The individual mirror elements are brightly coloured, each one different. Stretching across the surface of the entire work is a fence pattern in a highly contrasting yellow. What do we see when we look into this work of art? At first we see ourselves immersed in a polychromatic environment in front of a yellow fence – or wait, are we behind bars? The people viewing this work, as well as the room itself, seem trapped inside the artwork; the boundaries between reality and art begin to melt away. Reinforcing the ambiguity of our own standpoint is the fact that at the top of the work, the fence pattern begins to open up. Because this work actually reflects our own presence in the room, we must ultimately decide whether we see ourselves as fenced in – or on the outside, free. Hosking's art skillfully plays a key role in how we resolve this ambiguity.

In addition to working with the chain link fence pattern, Paul Hosking also frequently chooses camouflage as an element – the patterns may be those of an animal's fur or camouflage. In these works, he plays dramatically with the dimensions of showing/not showing. Of course, like his other works, these also reflect fragments of one's mirror image, one's identity. Here, too, people viewing the works exist on two levels: in front of the work and also inside it. However, thanks to the repeating patterns of camouflage that permeate these works, small details of our mirrored self are obscured. The mimetic properties of Hosking's works trigger a metamorphosis, and we oscillate between human beings and works of art.

It's not only with two-dimensional mirrored surfaces that Hosking delves into such transformative processes. Of particular note are his works that present as hinged, movable walls: these challenge our perspective in an even more interactive way. Recently, he has also created three-dimensional, free-standing floor sculptures. Here, he not only uses his characteristic fence pattern, but works with actual human silhouettes. Facial outlines, aligned like templates in both positive and negative space, provide the mirrors from Hosking's „Rorschach Series“ with a conceptual frame. In the exhibition Door in the Wall, for the first time you will experience a more recent version of Hosking's work from this series, namely a postmodern interpretation of the classic sculpted bust. With these sculptures, taking the form of three-dimensional facial silhouettes, the identity of the profiles becomes apparent only through the mirrored cross-section of the sculpture.

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In all his works, Hosking translates the fleeting reflection into a tangible form. As a person's mimesis is fixed, the work of art becomes an individual's material memory. Paul Hosking's mirror-based works can thus be read as identity-establishing media. We, our reflection, and our environment work together to define the images' meaning. By inviting us to reflect on both physical and intellectual reality, they can arouse an array of emotions and memories.

Gwendolyn Fässler

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