

## Tom Humphreys

### Under the wing

19.02–26.03 2017

Tom Humphreys is at Forde presenting a large selection of the plates which have punctuated his exhibits with pointillist touches since 2009. Shown for the first time as an autonomous collection, the plates are bought on the retail market before the artist overglazes and re-fires them himself. Much like a series of drawings sketched on the corner of a table, each work results from a quick and simple gesture that resolves a problem posed by the the plate's original design. Over the years this casual activity has engendered a considerable body of work.

However the ambitious desire to present a complete work runs counter to the the banal aspect of a collection of objects with no pedigree. One can discern similarities of size, concavity or colour amid the multitude of plates on display. Despite hanging the plates with a leaning towards formal typologies, the groupings still shed no light on an object whose ethnographic and historic qualities are practically of no consequence.

An inconsistent generosity likewise applies to the images that Humphreys transfer prints on the plates. They offer up a varied – but not representative – sampling of silhouettes, of portraits featuring men, women, children, groups, cats, dogs or architecture. Fixing ordinary moments on this lasting medium extracts them from the banal to bestow them with heightened attention. But the formats that contain the images and the close ups that trim them are indicative of an equivocal gesture.

The exhibition plays with exhausting the innumerable combinations possible of image and subject matter. Humphreys comes close to a fallible but perfectable algorithm. He matches up givens based on a slightly absurd methodology of gathering elements. The artist's hand can be identified by his gestural painting but engenders confusion between the modes of producing serial work and artisanal craft while also evoking the customisation possibilities offered by the modes of digital production. The plates bring to mind the attempts of destandardisation of the radical design, an imaginary craft from the Industrial Era, an iconoclastic situationism, painterly neo-romantic expressions and a nonchalant system of negation. The idea is the standard that is infinitely replicable. Like a signature.