

Paul Hosking

Parallax

Opening Thursday 30th August 2018, 5-8 p.m.
Exhibition 31st August – 10th November 2018

A mirror reflects an exact image of the space in front of it, albeit with minute and fascinating differences. In Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There, the young protagonist cannot help herself wondering what she might find in Looking-Glass House: "I'm sure it's got, oh! such beautiful things in it!" Although we may not wish to follow Alice's example of slipping through to the other side of a mirror, most of us cannot resist throwing an interested glance at any mirror we come across. If this is true for ordinary mirrors, it is even truer for Paul Hosking's extraordinary acrylic mirror works. Their coloured high-gloss surfaces alluringly reflect not just ourselves, but also the space around us, in perfect detail, in delicate hues, and with fascinating differences to our reality.

The British artist considers these high-gloss wall pieces, created in a marriage of mirrored glass with acrylic paint, to be paintings rather than mere mirrors. They enter into an immediate and complex dialogue with their surroundings, changing as the light shifts and shadows move. They contain not just the surrounding space but also the viewer. Marcel Duchamp's famous observation about the "spectator [who] adds his contribution to the creative act" explicitly manifests itself in these works. That is why the viewer becomes a part of them as she gazes at and into them. In Hosking's mirror world, we are all both performers and spectators, interrogators and respondents. Often, and particularly in private, we may look into a mirror in an act of contemplation and self-exploration. A similar situation occurs whenever we engage with a work of art – and our interest in such works always contains a glimmer of hope to discover something about ourselves, something that was previously concealed.

This process of reflection is given a particular hue – and a literal one at that – in Hosking's work: the "mirrors" shimmer in gold, black and aquamarine blue; they gleam with a touch of luxury that appeals to our deep-rooted desire for anything new, intact and immaculate. Moreover, in the coloured mirror the reflected image appears more distant, and all the more desirable for it. A golden hue can create a promising appealing aura, even in the starkest exhibition gallery.

Hosking's elegant mirror works convey complex issues of perception. The artist employs industrial materials including mirrored acrylics, etched glass and extruded aluminium. He makes sparing use of industrial techniques such as laser cutting and CNC routing to add symbolic forms, human faces in profile, for example, or inkblots developed by Swiss psychiatrist and psychologist Herrmann Rorschach (1884-1922) to detect patients' underlying personality disorders. Such forms enhance the notion of the mirror as a medium that leads the eye from the surface into greater depths, whereby we gain greater knowledge.

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Hosking also directly paints on the mirrors. The structural patterns that evoke fencing mesh create a barrier between the spectator's eye and the image in the mirror. The visual space simultaneously opens up and is closed down. The viewer becomes an integral part of the work, yet clear boundaries are also drawn.

Hosking's works encourage us to engage in a profound exploration of opacity versus transparency, of revelation versus concealment, of truth versus art.

Born in 1976, Hosking studied Fine Art at Plymouth Art College and at the much-celebrated Goldsmiths College, London. He has had numerous group and solo exhibitions in London, Los Angeles, São Paulo and Berlin. The artist lives and works in London.

Alice Henkes