

# The Studio Sculptures

## Droste 2.0

### Kim Knoppers

When you enter Galerie Caroline O'Brien, it is just as if you walk into a three dimensional Droste effect. You know: the effect of a picture recursively appearing within itself, as is used on the tins and boxes of the Dutch brand of cocoa *Droste*. The tin displays a nurse carrying a tray with hot chocolate and a tin on which one sees depicted the same nurse carrying a tray, and so on.

An image exhibiting the Droste effect depicts a smaller version of the image within itself in a recursive manner. In theory, the picture in picture effect continues deeper into the picture ad infinitum, but it really only goes as far as the image resolution will allow while still being visible. Personally I can never think too long about the Droste effect without being entangled in questions of reproducibility, infinity and space.

But Jaya Pelupessy can. He says: "In my work I add loops in which I reproduce my own reproduction." His starting point is photography, but in recent years he also uses printing techniques as silkscreen and letterpress, and film and sculpture. The working process always remains an essential part of the final visual result. This started in his first project called *Another Observer*, and was further extended in his cooperation project with Felix van Dam, *Traces of the Familiar*, and in his recent publication with Hans Gremmen, *Set-Put-Run*.

Now *The Studio Sculptures*. In here, Jaya Pelupessy plays with the Droste effect. Central is the photographic reproduction process, in particular the analog photo studio and the tools that are being used. Stacked developing reels, placed against and on a mirror, are being captured as sculptures that are bigger in size than the original reels. A softbox, a developing tray and a reflection screen, placed on a pedestal and photographed in black and white, get their

own autonomous quality. Their form slightly reminds of a contemporary interpretation of the *Neue Sachlichkeit of post World War I*, for instance of Albert Renger-Patzsch (1).

In *The Studio Sculptures*, the pedestal plays an important role. This white object represents an essential attribute in the puristic way of 'display' that belongs in the hyper self-conscious viewing space of the white cube. The pedestal has the quality to magically change the status of a modest object into something majestic. By placing tools of photography on the pedestal, the process itself is literally placed on a pedestal as well. The appearance of the work of Jaya Pelupessy is serious, but it is still tempting to see a slightly ironic wink to the status of photography in fine art.

The exhibition shows photographs and spatial work. The paper of the backdrop constantly changes due to the automatic up and down movement. The base of the papier-maché reproduction of the Paterson developing tray exists of pages from old books about the darkroom. In this way, darkroom techniques of analog photography reappears in his work. The same developing tray repeats itself in one of the photographs in the exhibition.

Now back to the Droste effect with the nurse and the red tin. It is clear that there is repetition in *The Studio Sculptures*, but not in an infinite way. A more important difference is that the repetition does not take place as a visual effect on the flat surface. Rather, there is an interaction between the flat surface, the physical space and the experience of the spectator in this space. Pelupessy created a detailed model of the gallery, in where a scaled 3D print of the heater and the same discoloration of the floor are present. (2) He placed his pictures inside the maquette and took photographs of it. The reproductions of the photographic work become the work itself and are shown in the gallery. Therefore the work is site-

1)



Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Cristalería [Gläser]*, 1926-1927  
17,1 × 22,9 cm. Galerie Berinson, Berlin © Albert Renger-Patzsch / Archiv Ann und Jürgen Wilde, Zülpich / VEGAP, Madrid 2017

2)



Setup *The Studio Sculptures*



specific. As the spectator, you are located in the reproduced Droste-space of the space you are in.

In the unique exhibition *The Studio Sculptures*, the form of presentation is the outcome of the subject of reproducibility, the research after this and the relationship with the spectator. Therewith it places itself in the tradition of artists moving around this theme, but without being a copy. Like for instance Thomas Struth and his *Museum Photographs*, a documentary series of people looking at art in museums (3). Central is the act of looking, the artworks are of secondary importance. All is taking place on the flat surface of the photograph. Or take the conceptual artist Louise Lawler, who poses questions about the status of an artwork that leaves the studio (4). Her recent exhibition in MoMA was an intriguing reflection on the format of the art show. Finally, the Post-Internet pioneer Artie Vierkant, who plays an ingenious game with the installation photos of an exhibition, a separate genre of photography in itself (5). Artie Vierkant changes JPGs in physical objects and poses questions about offline and online.

In his work, Pelupessy is switching between different positions: of the conceptual thinker who contemplates the creation process and the form of presentation, and of the almost artisanal manufacturer. These positions not only come together in *The Studio Sculptures*, but in all his work. With that, his young but consistent oeuvre is a unique tribute to the act of creation.

*Written by Kim Knoppers, art historian and curator at Foam Amsterdam. Translated by Galerie Caroline O'Brien*

3)



*Thomas Struth – Pergamon Museum I, Berlin, 2001*

4)



*Louise Lawler "WHY PICTURES.NOW" at MoMA, New York, 2017  
© 2017 The Museum of Modern Art. Photo: Martin Seck*

5)



*Artie Vierkant, Image Object  
Thursday 4 June 2015  
12:53PM, 2015, aluminium  
and vinyl, 49x49x38in.*



## The Studio Sculptures Jaya Pelupessy

**M** **GALERIE** *caroline@carolineobreen.com*  
**CAROLINE** +316 471 044 84  
**O'BREEN** *Opening hours:*  
*Wed - Sat, 12 - 5 pm.*

mondriaan  
fonds