

# Derek Kreckler

*Holey 1, 2003, type C photographs, diptych, 100 x 105 cm (each image), 6 floor spheres, spun aluminium and cast vinyl, 20 cm, 10 cm and 8 cm diam; Courtesy of the artist and Margaret Moore Contemporary Art, Perth*

Increasingly, visual experience consists of looking at various kinds of flat screens, so much so, that the contribution of early modern art to the construction and investigation of visual perception, to the illusionism of what mid-twentieth century Anglo-American philosophers used to call 'picturing', is often less the subject of critical attention than style (in painting), duration (in video) or reference (in photography).

Whether we understand the modern to have its beginnings in the work of painters post-Brunelleschi or in the work of Cézanne, it is the relationship between visual abstraction and the mathematical construction of a perspectival, 'realistic' space which is one of the primary factors making a work modern. In early painters like Masaccio, it is as much the use of perspectival space as the artist's humanist philosophy which allows us to recognise its modernity. In the paintings of Cézanne however, it is his use of tonal modeling which reduces images to shapes, and in so doing provides something akin to a visual reiteration of Plato's philosophic abstraction, his famous Theory of Forms.

It is now common to regard the invention of photography, its mechanisation of the production of images, as a profound shift in the history of the activity of picturing, but the late-twentieth century's rapid adaptation of digital technologies may be seen to be a more significant shift as far as picturing is concerned. Today the tension implicit in the ambiguity between visual abstraction and the mathematical construction of space, that tension between abstraction and realism, now operates at one remove. In digital imaging the traditional modern tension between visual abstraction and the mathematical, perspectival construction of space is intensified by the pressure placed on them by the encoded information which is used to 'render' the image.

Although it is in the context of the modern, a context in which the work of art is engaged in the production of a new, technology-driven visual sensibility, that Kreckler's work intervenes, it is this intensification of the play between abstraction and realism, this additional level in image-construction, this post-modernity, that is

the subject of Derek Kreckler's three works, *Holey 1, 2, 3*. Like many contemporary artists, Kreckler is familiar with digital technology's ability to encode a visual image, with its propensity for adjustment, manipulation and distortion, and yet Kreckler, too, offers us not the ironic fantasy which is the conventional post-modern image, but rather the paradox of the form of the image. The *Holey* series is a rhetorical, unanswered, question: the question of realism.

It is as if Kreckler sees – like those painters at the end of the medieval period and after the invention of perspective, and like Cézanne at the onset of Modernism – his work in the digital age as epochal. *Holey 1, 2, 3* is the presentation of the devolution of the modern image, the collapse of the tension between visual abstraction and perspectival realism at that point in time at which the digital encoding and re-encoding of the image is becoming the primary mode of image transmission. It is for this reason that the work is both two- and three-dimensional. The sculptural component of the work is both the proof that, thanks to digital technology, an image can be re-encoded, can be projected onto a surface that is not flat, and the statement by means of which Kreckler can declare that post-modern imaging has overwhelmed the norms of modern visual culture: the image has disappeared into the possibilities of the image.

But if that is the primary statement of *Holey 1, 2, 3*, there is another. In making the 'holes' of the photograph conform to the surface of the spheres, Kreckler has enacted digital technology's reversal of the revolution which was the invention of perspective: on the 'balls' that are the 'holes', the vanishing point itself has disappeared. The essential, stabilising fact which organised the perspectival system, was the engine of visual modernity and the end point of our eye, is now inside out.

*Holey 1, 2, 3* pictures the predicament of a modern understanding of the visual in this, the digital, post-modern age.

## John Mateer

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