

Megan Plunkett  
I BET YOU WISH YOU DID  
AND I KNOW I DO

→ Unit 4 Huntingdon

Estate

Bethnal Green Rd

London E1 6JU

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Megan Plunkett's image-based practice is situated between installation, sculpture, and photography. In her work, the artist investigates the conditions of photography and assumptions around visibility through a conscious dislocation and undoing of recognizable images. Carefully constructed photographs are shot, reshot and ultimately torn apart using a range of cameras, projections, and ad hoc lighting systems to cultivate a sense of distance within the image. This sense of estrangement is further enacted by the central role of repetition and reproduction: Plunkett's photographs always exist in pairs or groupings wherein individual images are continuously challenging the reality presented by the others. As such, Plunkett's practice is predicated on an acute awareness that the photographic image is always both a trace of what is in front of the camera and a record of the condition of its making – an understanding that photographs always inhabit an 'inbetweenness' that deconstructs the conventions of the image, forcing us to reassess and reorientate towards the visual.

For her new body of work, "I Live by the River," Plunkett photographed a series of plaster casts made from a disused Toyota car bumper found in a parking lot. In the images, the broken objects are propped up on the gravel ground of the Angeles National Forest, while a disjunctive shadow – created by the artist via extending a wooden stick against the sunlight above – refracts across the fragments at skewed angles. Four of the 15 images exhibited at Emalin are the "originals", taken in nature, while others are reprinted stills from filming the original shots as they slowly rotated on an ad hoc kinetic apparatus devised by the artist. Similarly, negative digital files are transformed into a silver gelatin print produced in the darkroom.

At the heart of *I Bet You Wish You Did and I know I do* lies an investigation of what working within the space of seriality possibilizes for the image. Looking at this series of photographs, one experiences a form of *jamais vu* (often understood as the opposite to *déjà vu*, characterised by the illusion that the familiar is being encountered for the first time). Although the recognizable text 'TOYOTA' serves as an entry point into understanding this otherwise obscure object, the image space and the conditions of the photograph remain intentionally unclear. Chromatic variations accompany blurs and contrasts that suggest a play

between movement and stasis. The immediate legibility of the images and the pleasures of easy viewing are foreclosed by a disruptive experience of dislocation and familiarity at once.

The exhibition space itself is complicit in this process of defamiliarization: as a group, the 15 photographs are disrupted both by their chunked arrangement across the walls as well as by the makeshift wall that truncates the view upon entering the space. Walking into the gallery, the body and the space it inhabits shifts our awareness to our optical and physical interactions with the images. Ultimately, Plunkett's photographs remind us that seriality is a condition of photography itself. Movement continues even in the still image as all photographs belong to a history of images and constantly refer to each other within the visual economy of photography. There are no standalone photographs: images are always a site for the accumulation of time and histories. As such, Plunkett's work is constantly pushing back against a false sense of totality or wholeness in favour of a photographic activity that expands outwards, where images are invariably bound up and imbricated with each other and their archive.

Megan Plunkett (b. 1985 in Pasadena, CA, USA) lives and works in Los Angeles. She completed her MFA at the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts, Bard College, in 2017. Exhibitions include *Tar Pits*, Redling Fine Art (Los Angeles, CA, USA. 2017); *The Garden of Forking Paths*, curated by Adam Marnie at Magenta Plains (New York, NY, USA. 2017); *A Sensuous Appearance of the Idea*, Bad Reputation (Los Angeles, CA, USA. 2016); *No Dice (1)*, curated by Howie Chen, Kimberly Klark (Brooklyn, NY, USA. 2015); *Sara two*, Hester (New York, NY, USA. 2015); *Another Cats Show*, 356 Mission (Los Angeles, CA, USA. 2014).

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Gallery opening hours: Wed-Sat, 11am-6pm