

Nicholas Cheveldave  
FIELD OF PLASTIC FLOWERS  
→ Unit 4 Huntingdon Estate  
Bethnal Green Rd  
London E1 6JU  
28 September –  
04 November 2017

Emalin is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of new works by the Canadian artist Nicholas Cheveldave, with sound by Hunter Cheveldave. This is his second exhibition with the gallery.

Nicholas Cheveldave's practice engages the ways in which the image economy of Western consumer culture generates and controls both an understanding and the communication of identity. At stake is the conscious construction of the self that takes place when publically available visual formulas are freely and fluidly appropriated, setting in motion a process where selfhood becomes a surface-based experience and individuality is pre-established. Found images gleaned from highly accessible sources - such as internet search engines and daily commuter papers - are layered into collages alongside the artist's personal photographs. Cheveldave then translates these collages into digital files, feeding them into 3D rendering software to generate amorphous glass-like structures. Incorporated into elaborate assemblages, these image manipulations draw attention to how highly edited cultural formulas are copied, decontextualized, disseminated and consumed.

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*Field of Plastic Flowers* comprises a new body of work that takes up questions of mark-making not only as a vehicle for communication but as both the discernible gesture of manifesting oneself and the demarcation of property. A series of wall-based works are activated by a central installation that houses a 7-channel audio piece, produced in collaboration with sound artist Hunter Cheveldave. Stacks of disused beer-kegs bear the signs and symbols of underground music culture, personal inscriptions, as well as the coded queues used by the homeless to signal safe sleeping spaces to one another. Transformed into tattoos, many of these symbols have entered into those effete contemporary subcultures for whom a widespread attempt to defy the mainstream has meant buying into a mass-fabricated idea of alternative lifestyles.

Coming into closer contact with the imagery employed across Cheveldave's wall-based works reveals indigo and overgrown residential pools, white plastic lawn furniture, artificial grass carpets covering the backyards of first-time homeowners and microwaves awaiting reheatable ready-meals. As such, Cheveldave takes as his point of departure the artifice and theatricality of suburbia, at the centre of which stands the consciously constructed political idea of the nuclear family and their suburban 'should-haves'.

Vandalized fences prompt us to rethink the act of trespassing as a resistive gesture to ownership, subverting the fantasy of boundless freedom by exposing some of its inherent barriers. At the same time, the presence of kegs, fences, faces and skin throughout the exhibition interrogates the function and efficacy of vessels and containers: as a seat of identification and as a site for the accumulation of detritus each of us leave behind in our pursuit of individuality.

The exhibition takes its title from the 1987 song 'Field of Artificial Flowers' by the psych-rock band Les Rallizes Dénudés. Artificiality figures centrally here: cat scratch-toys and bird houses speak of the man-made 'natural environments' created for domesticated animals that have grown dependent on humans for survival. Likewise, stacks of kegs - and the sonorous reverberations they produce - emulate the Hoodoo rock formations and the whistling winds typical of the arid Canadian Badlands where Cheveldave grew up. In recreating this kind of environment bereft of natural plausibility, *Field of Plastic Flowers* asks us to rethink the ideological parameters of the objects and images we accumulate and appropriate. As such, this sculptural 'landscape' represents an uninhabitable space: a space that, like that of the readymade subject formations explored in Cheveldave's collages, can never fully be inhabited.

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"I'm a creature of habit, I'm full of love, just going about my days on Planet Earth. I have a cat, (which I love as much as my children), I feed the birds organic seeds, I recycle and care for Mother Nature. My plot is good to me, but outside my fence is a world wanting to harm me. It's the Badlands out there, you know?"

– Stella (age 63)

"Fuck your Fence!  
I'll drown your stupid fucking cat,  
I'll shoot all your birds,  
I'll burn your fucking life!"

– TrollBoi3 (age 9)

"In the Badlands, the landscape has learned how to speak. The wind has slowly carved the rock and the Hoodoos that remain whisper to the land when the breath of the earth is passed through its columns."

– Pilsna (age 54)

"I need this now and there is no one who can tell me I cannot have it. I need love, I need support, I need the things that will fill me up. I need to buy a house!"

– Pat (aged 43)

"People wish to be remembered, why else would you carve your name into something? The bar table, the trees in the forest, the rocks in the fields – people are just harmful, and vandalize the earth so they don't feel so microscopic. We want to feel in control so we harm things but the truth is that we are all together just a tiny fractal that will be forgotten when Earth's surface heats up and burns us all alive."

– Bud (age 33)

Carving our demarcations onto the earth, pissing on our territory like an animal. One puts hope in vessels that carry the promise to fulfill dominance, to mark what is yours, in attempt to bring you closer to the lucid fantasy of freedom. Keeping their flesh warm and their blood flowing. Climacteric desires to own and control your own containment. If I can own it then it can be distorted to nurture – fungible vessels and universal shields worn in hopes of one day being able to escape.

Dream Baby Dream.

The memento, a field of plastic, all the things you have collected, left for another to clean up, intentionally in hopes of being remembered as a person and dreaming to not be remembered as their successor's burden.

The Juggernaut Dream–Wave.

A trail of filth scattered, sun bleaching over the sand, being recycled to feed the growth of spring flowers. The earth will regenerate.

Uninhabitable spaces will be decorated, a Field Of Plastic Flowers, the Darklands beautified to sell the illusion of contentment. Do not cross my line, I only want a safe place to sleep.

You can't put your arms around a memory.

"I owned an animal, it needed me at one point, I fed it with the same tuna, from the same bowl. I was needed once. I don't think it ever really liked Hellmann's mayonnaise quite like I did. They never spoke to me, or asked me how I was, but I knew the little rascal cared for me too."  
– Jason V. (age 11)

Nicholas Cheveldave was born in 1984 in Victoria, CA and lives and works in London. He completed his MFA at Goldsmiths, London in 2014. Exhibitions include *Fickle Food Upon A Shifting Plate*, Studio Leigh (London, UK, 2017); *A Screen of Flesh*, COMA (Sydney, AU); *History of Nothing*, White Cube (London, UK, 2016); *National Gallery 2: Empire*, CHEWDAY's (London, UK, 2015); *Bloody Life*, Herald St. (London, UK, 2016); *The Mortician's Athlete and the Dreaded Barista*, Emalin (Milan, Italy, 2015); *ALL FOR NOTHING*, Carl Kostyal (London, UK, 2015).

For further information please visit [www.emalin.co.uk](http://www.emalin.co.uk), email us on [info@emalin.co.uk](mailto:info@emalin.co.uk) or call on +44 77 9464 5380.

Gallery opening hours: Wed–Sat, 11am–6pm and by appointment.