

MATT STOKES

*Dead Sea Deaf Sea*

17- February – 31- March

**Preview: 16 February 2017, 6-8 pm**

**WORKPLACE LONDON**

61 Conduit Street, Mayfair

London, W1S 2GB

Thursdays and Fridays, 10 – 6pm



**WORKPLACE** is pleased to announce *Dead Sea Deaf Sea*, the first solo exhibition of Matt Stokes at Workplace London.

*Dead Sea Deaf Sea* is an exhibition of new film, sculpture and photography by Stokes predominantly derived from his research into HMS Standard, an experimental World War II psychiatric rehabilitation camp, established by the Royal Navy to find an answer to rising mental illness and insubordination in its ranks. The camp had a duplicitous role - to treat those traumatised by life in active service and to weed out 'malingerers' feigning psychosis to escape service. The work shown follows on from *Stone Frigate*, a LARP (Live Action Role Play) conceived and written by Stokes (commissioned by Kielder Art & Architecture) that took place near the original, now flooded, site of HMS Standard in the Tyne Valley, Northumberland.

At WORKPLACE London we will show 2 large-scale sculptures of weaving frames that were used within therapeutic activity. Woven by Stokes with ragged World War II Royal Navy uniforms to ambiguously spell out DEAD SEA and DEAF SEA, these pieces allude to the powerful passive presence of the sea as a site of conflict, a source of dread, and as psychological metaphor. A new series of 14 black and white photographs, which have been doctored and hand printed by Stokes using water from Keilder reservoir (under which the location of HMS Standard is now submerged). A sailor sat smoking on a hillside is shown next to a landscape; repeated 3 times, the diptychs are each hand tinted to represent different psychological conditions - referring directly to Siegfried E. Katz' article 'Color Preference in the Insane' published in *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* in 1931 – which influenced elements of the LARP design. Alongside this, a short document of *Stone Frigate* is set against a haunting rendition of 'Depth of My Ego' by the Scottish folk singer Matt McGinn, sung by George Unthank (who played the Chaplain in the LARP) to signify the end of the event.

*The Oyster* is a 16mm looped film projection shot by Stokes on Santa Monica Beach in California. In the distance a solitary figure faces the sea listening to a clamshell CD Walkman, shifting hypnotically and manically from foot to foot overdubbed by a slowed loop of folk reel and an abridged narration on the history of the American Oyster. Charting the initial exploitation of a natural resource to its growth as a luxury food and the inevitable tensions between industrial overproduction and the fragilities of the social and environmental eco-system.

Throughout this exhibition Stokes employs both historical narrative and re-enactment to articulate pertinent anxieties around epic shifts in global politics and their relationship to intimate psychological states. *Dead Sea Deaf Sea* presents a mesmerising and sublime meditation upon the connection between the fragility of the individual, and the socio-political undercurrents that shape our lives.

**Matt Stokes** was born in Penzance, Cornwall in 1973 and lives and works in Newcastle and Gateshead. His recent solo exhibitions include Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany; CAAC Seville, Spain; De Hallen, Haarlem, Netherlands; Dilston Grove / Matts Gallery, London, UK; BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK; and Arthouse, Austin, Texas, USA. Stokes was the winner of the 2006 Beck's Futures Prize.

For further information about the exhibition please contact: [miles@workplacegallery.co.uk](mailto:miles@workplacegallery.co.uk)

**WORKPLACE**