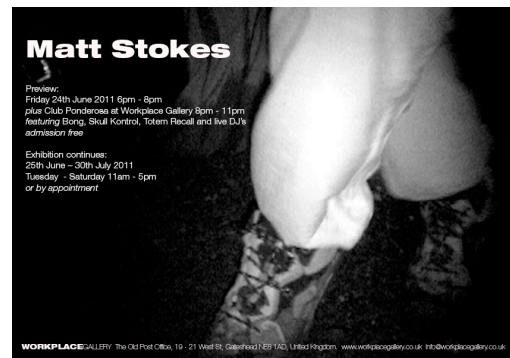


Matt Stokes

25th June – 30th July 2011
Tuesday - Saturday, 11am - 5pm
(or by appointment)

Preview: Friday 24th June, 6 - 8pm



Workplace Gallery is pleased to present our first solo exhibition by Matt Stokes.

Matt Stokes' recent practice focuses on the investigation of music subcultures. Working with musicians, writers, actors, composers and local community figures, Stokes looks to the social position and power that marginal groups have to influence a broader demographic. Often drawing attention to the spontaneous creativity that exists within counter-cultures and the potent visual practice that runs alongside them. Stokes explores the way in which these communities exchange ideas through music and their unique visual aesthetics. Operating independently from mainstream marketing, these communities challenge conventional and hierarchical methods of disseminating information. Collaboration and a sense of shared authorship are at the core of these movements and consequently mirrored in Stokes' projects.

For *Jubilee Dancer* Stokes revisited footage he shot on a night-vision camera at an unofficial rave staged on farmland in South Cumbria, UK in June 2002. The footage was taken in the lead up to, and during a rave organised by a farmer as an alternative to the Queens Golden Jubilee celebrations, and shows an extract of a single dancer performing to camera. The raw clip begins by settling on the dancers feet, which crisscross and glide lightly across a dirt floor, before slowly panning upwards. Stripped of its original sound and the driving bass-line, the dancers movements become ambiguous. In particular, his rhythmic trainer-clad feet hint strongly at more traditional forms of dance music and communal celebration that were once commonplace to the area and its rural communities; The transference of the work from a digital format to 16mm film along with its replacement soundtrack, a traditional folk 'reel', underscores this sense of the past and has the effect of dislocating the original footage from the time period in which it was filmed - harking to a bygone age – something that is now perhaps mirrored by those who took part in early rave culture.

Occupying the largest of Workplace's gallery spaces is *Club Ponderosa* a hybrid space designed by Stokes to operate as part meeting house, nightclub, theatre, village hall and social club. Stokes first established *Club Ponderosa* during an artist's residency at 176, London. Drawing from the history of the building which was formerly a Methodist Chapel, and once home to the famous London Drama Centre, the aim of the club was to create an informal and flexible social-space that would foster new encounters between groups, and act as a catalyst for the creation of events designed and programmed in collaboration with people living or working in the Camden area. *Club Ponderosa* was also home to *MASS*, a sound system fabricated from donated parts and online speaker designs, which was pivotal to the functioning of the club. Reworked for Workplace Gallery as a more sculptural experience *Club Ponderosa* and *MASS* will be activated by live performances by local bands and performers during the exhibition as well as incorporating footage and ephemera from previous events.

Dance Swine Dance depicts an anonymous cartoon character modeled on an amalgam of styles associated with distinctive modern music and dance cultures, dating from the early 1900s to the present day. The animated black and white 16mm film character energetically goes through a cycle of movements that epitomize the represented dance genres, subtly highlighting threads between each. Despite their apparent shifts in tempo and intensity, the tireless figure remains immersed in a perpetual state of concentration and enjoyment.

In 2007, Arthouse in Austin Texas invited Stokes to create a new film project. *these are the days* is the result of Stokes' close work with communities connected to Austin's music scene and his extensive research into anti-establishment musical genres, particularly punk. Investigating the dichotomies expressed within earlier and later punk communities, his research ultimately led to the creation of the dual

channel film installation. The first film features footage from a specially organized punk show staged by Stokes at the Broken Neck, an alternative venue in Austin and filmed by renowned cinematographers Lee Daniel and P.J. Raval. The second film, created in response to a recording session at Austin's Sweatbox Studios, depicts a makeshift band's musical reaction to the event footage. A reversal of roles between audience and performers, the work examines the concepts of inspiration and response; Punk as it was then and as it is now, different yet the same. Presented in the domestically scaled attic spaces of Workplace Gallery's former Post Office building alongside previously unseen material from Stokes' own personal archive gathered during the production process the work provides both an immersive and intimate counterpoint to the rest of the exhibition.

Past projects by Matt Stokes include: 'The Gainsborough Packet' a period film and folk song exploring the link between Camden, London and Newcastle through research into a letter found in the Tyne and Wear Museum Archives; 'Real Arcadia' an ongoing archive of objects and ephemera examining the underground acid house and rave culture that embedded itself in caves and quarries in the Cumbrian hills during the late eighties and early nineties; and 'Long After Tonight' a 16mm film of a historical re-enactment of a Northern Soul 'all-nighter' in a church in Dundee - which won Stokes the prestigious Beck's Futures Art Prize in 2006. Recent and forthcoming solo exhibitions include De Hallen, Haarlem, Netherlands; Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany; and CAAC, Seville, Spain.

Workplace Gallery was founded in 2005 by artists Paul Moss and Miles Thurlow. Based in Gateshead UK, Workplace Gallery represents a portfolio of emerging and established artists through the gallery programme, curatorial projects and international art fairs. Workplace Gallery currently resides in The Old Post Office, Gateshead; a listed 19th Century red brick building built upon the site where the important British artist, engraver and naturalist Thomas Bewick (1753-1828) lived and died.

Kindly supported by



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