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TONY MATELLI  
MISE EN ABYME

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*Mirrors and copulation are abominable, for they multiply the image of man.*

*-Jorge Luis Borges*

*...I dragged my fingers across the mirror. I made a painting in the tired dust. A cave painting; it was an image of Lucy. Two days later some asshole wiped it out and now his stupid shit is there. Who cares? This is a palimpsest of the worst kind. Christ there's not even a message here, just dumb marks. What do you expect in a place like this anyway. Write over my name, I write over yours. Time obscures everything.*

*-Tony Matelli*

Stephane Simoens is proud to present Tony Matelli's second solo show in Belgium; *Mise en Abyme* comprised of 4 new small scale sculptures and several new wall works. The title, originally from the French, means, "placing into infinity" or "placing into the abyss". Its more commonplace usage is to describe the visual experience of standing between two mirrors, seeing an infinite reproduction of ones image. In literary criticism, *Mise en Abyme* is a type of frame story, in which the core narrative can be used to illuminate some aspect of the framing story.

With *Mise en Abyme*, Matelli has created a setting where parallel moments in time and space co-exist, are frozen, and repeated. Sculptures on the verge of collapse; among them *The Constant Now*, 2010, a rich entry point into such a universe. A smoking cigarette is fixed atop a cardboard box, expelling an endless and ceaseless stream of smoke. It is a kind of hourglass, recording the infinite. It is time fixed, just as it is time, broken.

Converging moments in time are recorded in Matelli's new series of ongoing mirror paintings—in this case, time is documented in the form of dust and grime, settled on a surface. A word is wiped or a drawing scrawled, only to be thinly veiled by more filth. The mirrors are, in a sense, palimpsests of long distances between instants of perversion, and testaments to the indefatigable nature of time. Installed parallel to one another these paintings and anything in between multiplies into filthy ocular infinity.

In the new series of work entitled *Letterhead* Matelli produces a different kind of repeated self-image. Taking as his starting point the ultimate trope of professionalism: the company letterhead, Matelli treats it as a surface for manifold explorations. In lieu of any stylistic coherence all of his stolen images, loose painting, hard abstraction, bodily functions, borrowed styles, cut out holes, applied objects, decorative patterns, even copied art works become framed within his "professional identity". Enlarged 200-300% and painted on aluminum, these letterhead pages become as much a kind of mental self-portrait as they are a parody of the professionalism that frames them. Matelli seems to suggest that the artist and the professional are an impossible conflation, unable to occupy the same space at the same time. Like most of Matelli's self-portraiture, these are grotesques, but of a different kind. The cool seriality of these paintings, combined with their incongruous stylistic interventions point to an identity slipping away held together only by contrivance and name.

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Tony Matelli's work can currently be seen in:

*Realismus, Das Abenteuer der Wirklichkeit*, Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung, München

*The Wasteland*, Whitebox, NYC