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contemporary fine art
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LINGERING

James William Murray & Philip Van Isacker

14 September – 22 October 2018

Stephane Simoens Contemporary Fine Art is pleased to present 'Lingering', a two person exhibition by Philip Van Isacker (Ghent, Belgium, °1949) and James William Murray (Brighton, England, °1988).

This exhibition is the result of a year-long exchange of thematic and art-historical concerns between Van Isacker, Murray, and Simoens. At a certain point during this dialogue the verb 'lingering' was used to describe the way in which the human form and figuration permeate both of the artists' work, however abstract the referent might be. 'Lingering' is a curious word with several subtly different applications. It can be used to suggest a prolonged passage of time, or even something unshakeable, like the weight of art history... It also relates to that which remains as a (by-)product of a process or event. In the context of this exhibition this could be the trace of the artist's touch, or even the art-object itself. Finally the term might also apply to notion of 'the gaze'; the gaze of the artist upon a given subject or model, as well as that of the viewer upon the resulting work of art.

For Van Isacker, both an artist and art historian, the concern for the human figure stems from a deep appreciation and identification of the classical form, and its resonances throughout art history. Sculpture without properties (scholar stone) is a work comprising a large uncarved piece of calcareous stone placed upon a bespoke bronze base. The handmade quality of the base, cast from clay sculpted by the artist's hands, in contrast with the found stone, produces a mimetic tension that intensifies the instinctual human tendency to search for the figure in the curves, lines, and contours of organic forms. A similar effect is evoked in his Drawings without properties. These works are part of an ongoing series of labour-intensive graphite on paper drawings, in which the abstract and the figurative becoming inextricably entangled throughout vast networks of soft yet energetic lines.

Murray's relationship to the body and its representation is one based around questions of touch, trace, surface, materiality, and desire, derived from an academic background in photography. While these conceptual concerns remain at the forefront of his thinking, his work has subsequently expanded to incorporate painting and sculpture and it is at points of intersection between these three primary media that he now works. For the occasion of

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this exhibition Murray has produced *Beyond Reach*, a new series of works on paper produced by making a succession of gestural marks with copper grease (used as a lubricant in mechanics and engineering) on a slab of marble. The paper was then laid on the marble, allowing the fibres to soak up the grease and the copper particles suspended within it. Presented alongside this series are several new geometric 'screen' works, which have become a recurring motif. Situated somewhere between painting and sculpture, these minimal works are each named after different pairs of lovers (real and fictional), suggesting that the twin panels function as 'stand ins' or 'surrogates' for desired bodies.

Van Isacker and Murray each have unique and complex relationships to the body, corporeality, and figuration, both formally and conceptually. All of the works presented here, in their own way, emphasise the human form as a point of departure, lingering on or indeed just over the horizon.