

In the Service of Reality
Tobias Hohn & Stanton Taylor
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Exhibition Text

On the market, in the stores, in displays, the commodities stand still, ready for a single kind of activity, namely their exchange. Example: a commodity marked at a definite price is subject to the fiction of complete material immutability, and not only by human hands. Even nature must hold its breath when it comes to the commodity's body, or at least for as long as the price is supposed to stay the same....Wherever a society's foundational relations are reduced to trade, a vacuum free from humans' manual and intellectual activities must be created, so that in this vacuum their connection to society can take hold.¹

Touch glass, become window, become screen, threshold an interface between one world and the next. Fingerprints, smears accumulate, traces of a wish interrupted. Servitude, but frictionless. Value exists in the mind, but how does it feel in your hand? For the most part, you may never know. Cut off from the objects and symbols that crowd the senses, the necessity of making it in a world designed not to be your own.

In the Service of Reality is shot through store windows and museum vitrines. Vision mediated through glass. Neither there nor here, inside nor out. What you see isn't so much an in-between as an interim. During not too distant lockdowns, storefronts in Düsseldorf and Berlin became the leftovers of a reality in the process of disappearing. Retailers outstripped by e-commerce; small businesses obliterated by restaurant chains. Against the rhythms of commerce, museums preserve the past for all eternity. Two worlds momentarily inoculated against human life, heralding an inhuman time to come.

Reflections are the feedback in this communication system. The fantasy of unobstructed visual availability, abundance papers over its material opposite—death, scarcity, and a poverty of experience. The desire to display overshadows any ostensible object. As feedback, one world careens into another, amplifying. Space flattens, the public vanishes, objects overlaid endlessly—in other words, communion, though not for us. An abundance of detail borders on abstraction, albeit one that was always already there. Distinctions dissolved, everything equals everything, interchangeably. A dream logic, us sleepwalking, a logic all the same.

Tobias Hohn & Stanton Taylor first met while studying photography at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and have been collaborating since 2014. Their work has been regularly shown in Germany, at the Bonner Kunstverein, Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Museum Abteiberg, and Galerie Max Mayer among others. The current presentation at Baader-Meinhof marks their first solo exhibition in the United States.

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