



MATTHEW ALLEN

Black Sea Cycle, 2017
Polished graphite on linen
36 x 20 x 6 cm each

“The hands want to see, the eyes want to caress” Goethe

Goethe's apparent inversion of otherwise defined sensory roles tells us much about the sensuality of vision, its complicity with truth and fiction, and the quality of tactility that vision can extend.

On a late autumn day in Amsterdam, Matthew Allen's works line up with benign military precision, braced for the studio's crisp conditions. Though the works are modest in scale, one immediately registers that their proportions are carefully dictated. The “tailoring” of the object and the relationship between this metallic meniscus and the wall is vital. The fine linen weave is folded immaculately around the ample support, negating some of the distractions that orthodox supports can present. But Allen is a painter and doesn't wish to disguise that fact.

Black Sea Cycle sits out from the wall, appearing contained – held still, at least until the light shifts. Immediately each panel responds to the flux, asserting their volume and revealing a mercurial character. The regular cadence of shadows communicate their thickness, the shimmer across the surface insinuates their interior depth. As the face of each panel illuminates, blinking and reflecting the cool light, they also import hints of ambient colour. For a painter like Allen, whose earlier works have been driven by a considered investigation of colour, these cooler, restrained forms appear to eschew colour and paints materiality and unpredictable behaviour. However, on closer inspection we can sense a very intimate finessing of the surface and encouragement of material that gathers a new history en route.



Untitled (full field), 2017

Polished graphite on linen

26 x 18 x 4 cm



Untitled (full field), 2018
Polished graphite on linen
36 x 20 x 6 cm

“I felt myself still reliving a past which was no longer anything more than the history of another person”

Marcel Proust

In discussing his architecture, Peter Zumthor talks about having “to do something to make memory speak. Art can do that: the art of building, just as much as writing, painting or music.”

This aspiration is shared by Allen. The intimacy of his process and the relationship between gesture and evidence seems to be about the opportunity to reveal a stored subliminal cache of memories. However, the reverse may also be true. His mantra-like burnishing of the materials and the psychological hermeticism of the process that detains him for the duration of the making, ultimately releases Allen from the work leaving us with a residue, where memory is free to speak and to become entangled with those of the viewer.

It may be that the process of making and the involvement with matter, itself imbued with other lives, serves the contradictory aims of both entangling and disentangling our memories and histories.





Untitled (full field), 2018
Polished graphite on linen
48 x 34 x 6 cm

8.

Mitch Iburg

Natural Ash Glazed Chawan, 2018

Native Minnesota kaolinic clays with glaze.

Wood fired for four days with pine, oak, and mixed hardwoods



9.

On the subject of history, Matthew's work would have sat happily in the 2001 exhibition *Six Degrees of Separation* where it might have been positioned between Gunter Umberg's painting and the polished wall work of Karin Sander. Allen's paintings share body and density with Umberg – the thickness of forms that push out from the wall asserting their mass and materialization. Sander's discreet recording of time and touch sits within the wall itself. Like Allen's surfaces they are brought to our attention by light and by our own movement. In this sense they make us aware of our own sensitivity and provide a window to our own consciousness rather than the wilful presentation of another's.



Günter Umberg

Untitled, 2017

(Prussian blue) poliment pigment, damar on mdf
40 x 36.5 cm

Untitled, 2017

(Orange) poliment pigment, damar on mdf
48 x 23 cm

Matthew Allen

Untitled (full field), 2018

Polished graphite on linen
71 x 42 x 6 cm





Detail - *Untitled*, 2017
Polished graphite on linen
20 x 12 x 5 cm

Detail - *Globular jar with conical cover*
Sui dynasty, late 6th century
Northern stoneware with green glaze
Keith Mcleod Fund



Helmut Federle

Cornerfield Painting XXII

(To Sen no Rikyū 1522–1591), 1995

Oil in canvas

48 x 55 cm

Matthew Allen

Untitled (full field), 2018

Polished graphite on linen

60 x 34 x 4 cm

Recently a single painting of Matthew's was installed beside one of Helmut Federle's *Cornerfield Paintings* in the galleries exhibition *Portrait without a Face*. At little more than head size and presenting as a tarnished mirror we are invited to peer into this shaded pool in search of particles of recognition. That the object conveys absence as much as presence speaks to its essential contradiction.

All of Federle's paintings insinuate an interior ceremony in his own practice, but in *Cornerfield Painting XXII (to Sen No Rikyū 1522-1591)* there is direct reference to an explicit ceremony and the death of the revered Japanese Tea Master Sen No Rikyū. There is a profound quality of melancholia in this lament for Sen No Rikyū, an atmosphere aided by Federle's embrace of the subdued Northern European light, an attribute Allen now understands having exchanged the harsher light of Australia for a new life in Amsterdam.

Beneath the cooler emotional temperature at which Allen's graphite works operate, there is an abiding vivacity. The way that the work responds to shifts in light and borrows colour from the environment promotes their mercurial capacities. In this way they are as much about the first light of day as the last - sanguine and assured. The intimacy in their making takes matter and imbues it with life and emotion. There is no doubt that his works give the viewer a physically and conceptually reflective opportunity that can be both poignant and rousing, muted and articulate.



“I am interested in the history that is stored and accumulated in landscapes, places and things. The things I can see and feel in the landscape are physical and real, no matter how mute, hidden, and mysterious they might first appear.”

Peter Zumthor



Untitled (beam) I & Untitled (beam) II, 2018

Polished graphite on linen

187 x 38 x 7 cm each



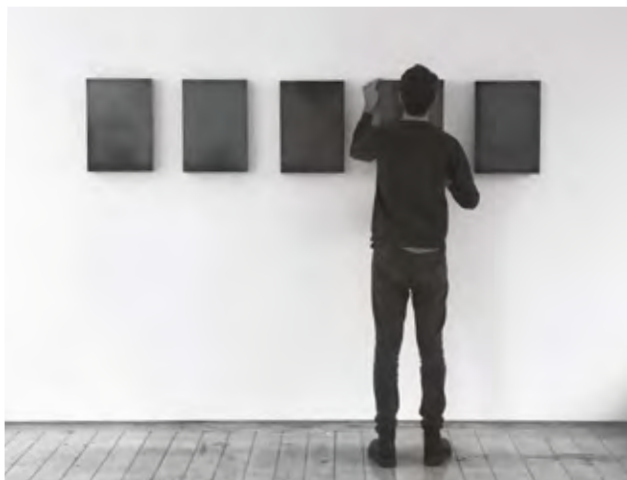
Untitled (full field), 2018

Polished graphite on linen

48 x 34 x 6 cm

Below - **Matthew Allen** in his

Amsterdam studio, 2018



20.



21.

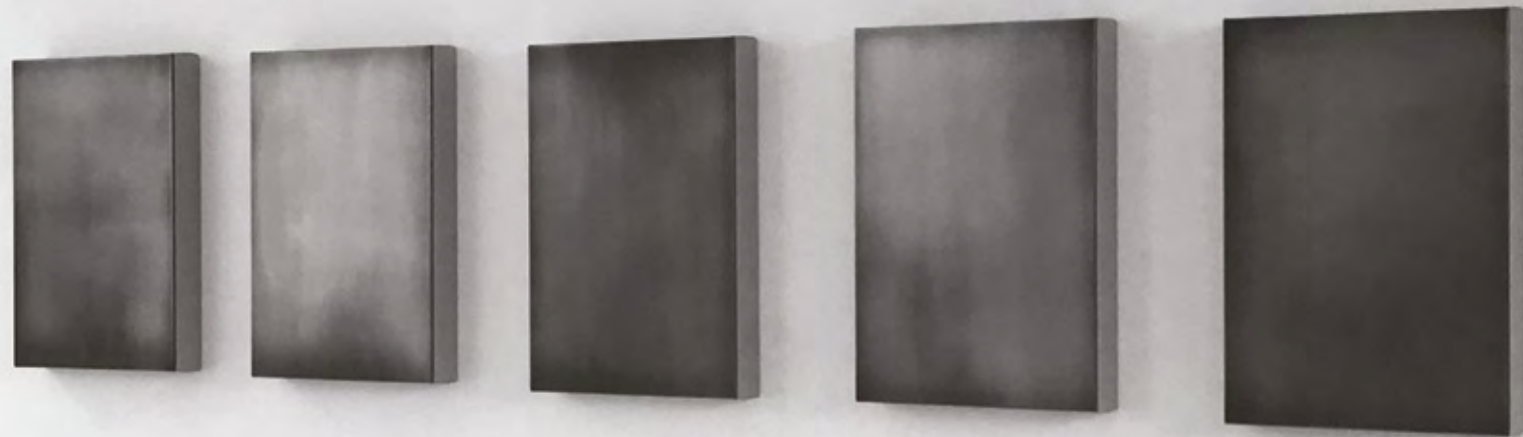
Cycle IV, 2018

Polished graphite on linen

48 x 34 x 6 cm each

Installed in Allen's

Amsterdam studio



Install detail - *Untitled & Untitled*, 2017
Polished graphite and joint compound on linen
40 x 30 x 5 cm each



Untitled (quartet), 2019
Polished graphite & acrylic on linen on wood
44 x 31 x 6 cm each





Eventfall, 2019
Installation view
Fox Jensen McCrory, Auckland

Untitled, 2017
Polished graphite on linen
26 x 15.5 x 4 cm



PAGE 6. PROUST, M 1913–1927, *IN SEARCH OF LOST TIME* [VOLUMES 1 TO 7] GRASSET AND GALLIMARD, FRANCE

PAGE 9. IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

PAGE 10. IMAGE COURTESY OF FOX JENSEN McCORORY, FROM THE EXHIBITION *BLUE*, 2017, AUCKLAND

PAGE 13. TUNG, W 2001, *EARTH TRANSFORMED CHINESE CERAMICS IN THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON*, MFA PUBLICATIONS, BOSTON

PAGE 15. IMAGE COURTESY OF FOX JENSEN McCORORY, FROM THE EXHIBITION *PORTRAIT WITHOUT A FACE*, 2018, AUCKLAND

PAGE 16. ZUMTHOR & LENDING, P & M 2018, *A FEELING FOR HISTORY*, VERLAG SCHEIDEGGER & SPIESS AG, ZÜRICH

PAGE 28 - 29. IMAGE COURTESY OF FOX JENSEN McCORORY, FROM THE EXHIBITION *EVENFALL*, 2019, AUCKLAND

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