

ED ATKINS - NICOLAS DESHAYES  
**A KILLER WHALE BREACHING IN SOFT FOCUS**

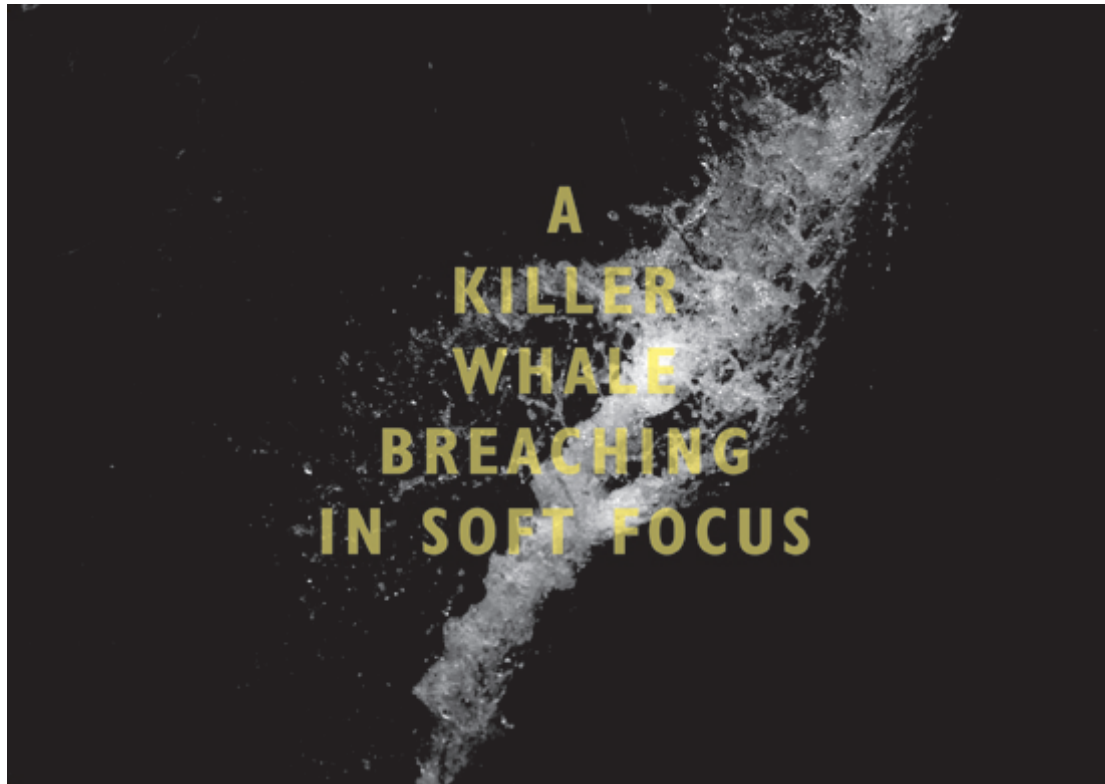
**TRANSMISSON GALLERY, Glasgow**

**PREVIEW: SAT 30.10.10**

**02.11.10 - 20.11.10**

**OPEN TUES - SAT, 11-5\***

\*Until 8pm on Thursday 04.11.10



Transmission Gallery is pleased to present *A Killer Whale Breaching in Soft Focus*, an exhibition by Ed Atkins and Nicolas Deshayes. The exhibition stems from an investigation into notions of stock imagery undertaken over the course of the past year by the artists.

Appropriated and re-purposed indefinitely, a stock image's success might be judged on the basis of its pliancy – one of Getty Images' principal tenets for aspiring contributors. The stock image loiters between a necessary ambiguity and an equally necessary specificity, withholding its meaning until it is applied, at which point absorbing the accent of its surroundings. The stock image might also be used as a superlative, describing – in as direct and unequivocal a manner as possible – the way in which one is supposed to react, signalling to the viewer the use of a particular set of interpretative tools through convention, familiarity and genre.

The aim of the artists was to understand the similarities and differences between the ethos of stock imagery – with its immanent ambivalence and clearly defined purpose – and that of art. Stripped of purpose, for example, what is a stock image? A highly charged but ultimately desultory image, perhaps: an image that elicits an affective response, but without overt meaning. What is that affect and what are its political and social repercussions?

In this pursuit, the body of work presented in *A Killer Whale Breaching in Soft Focus* referentially spans several distinct scenarios of the stock image. Its past, in the politicised specificity of Magnum photography, music production and cinema auteurism; its position under advertising's homogenising appropriation and veiling of conceit behind lifestyle and how post-modernist tendencies might subvert this; its pre- and post-histories, in the meaning and influence of particular materialities, the reach of

clay, of water, which might at once be both contextually contingent and utterly universal. Stock imagery is reliant upon truism and genre in order to be stock. The pliancy of a stock image might also be put to the service of its undoing.

Citing in particular the cultural spheres of cinema and design, the work is manifested as sculpture, video, posters, writing and modes of display – a showroom or a set upon and within which, appropriately enough, both the deconstruction and absolute reiteration of the image will be enacted.

Extending frame by frame across the gallery floor, Nicolas Deshayes' modular vacuum-formed plastic and powder-coated aluminium 'display system' evokes a design language reminiscent of service industry and interactive museum scenography. Cutting from one surface to another at different levels of resolution – from the pixelated CAD representation of rippling liquid, to an expanse of cracked barren earth and a slip of toxic slurry – the abrupt transition from one nonspecific location to another describes a compression of global crises and technologies within an image where the urgency of specific realities jostles with more ambivalent and consumptive modes of representation – like the pseudo apprehension of a landscape within a screensaver. Distance and intimacy collide within the definition of these images; a hyperreal intimacy wherein High Definition resolution is proffered as a meagre substitute for specificity, and where superlative representation demands the quiet death of the original.

In Ed Atkins' video, *The Anthropophagus*, this death is meted out. The gruesome cannibal protagonist, glimpsed and eluded to throughout the exhibition in drawings and photocopies, represents the oxymoron of specific genre – the heterogeneousness of the character and his ineffable threat, alongside the homogeneity of his constrictive genre, horror. He is a fantasy of affectivity and intimacy, poised between the intimate horrors of viscera – of the body in close-up – and the indifferent distance of generic affect and the digital moving image. Again, in the representative act – hyped-up through contemporary technologies of production and editing – the materiality of the image and its display undoes the reality of that which is being represented. The cannibal consumes and replaces its prey.

Ed Atkins (b. 1982) lives and works in London. He studied at Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design and The Slade School of Art. He has recently exhibited at Monitor, Rome; Dependence, Brussels; Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2010, Liverpool; and The Frieze Art Fair. He will present a solo project at Cabinet, London in November.

Nicolas Deshayes (b. 1983) lives and works in London. He graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2009 and Chelsea College of Art and Design in 2005. Solo exhibitions include: *Concrete*, Hayward Gallery, 2010; *The Two Jonnys' Project Space*, London, 2010; and *Moot*, Nottingham, 2005. Recent group exhibitions include: Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2009; *Radio IPS*, International Project Space, Bourneville, 2010; and *Keep Floors and Passages Clear*, One Thorseby Street, Nottingham, 2010, which will tour to White Columns, New York in 2011.

This exhibition has been generously supported by The Elephant Trust, Talbot Designs, London and Plasti-Kote Ltd.