

ILIA BECKMANN



# MENS IN CORPORE

An Exhibition about Meta-, Physicality in and of Photography  
Upstairs Woolloongabba Art Gallery, 613 Stanley St  
Opening 6 pm on 06/12/12

## MENS IN CORPORE

Ilia Beckmann

b. 1985, Schwäbisch Hall, Germany

'Photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire'

Susan Sontag.

In a post-photographic era, the role of the photograph has been completely redefined. Considering the ease at which images can be created, replicated, and altered there is an inherent need to examine how these issues impact upon our relationship with the photographic image.

*The work of Ilia Beckmann deconstructs the fundamental elements of photography, posing questions regarding its value, application and interpretation. By utilising the technologies, processes and content traditionally associated with photography, he communicates with its history, creating a dialogue that explores how we have come to understand and interpret this medium within contemporary culture.*

Beckmann's use of photography transgresses the traditionally accepted presentation of the flat, photographic image, extending into installation and sculptural forms which integrate 'the real' and the crafted.

In *Dem Bildnis ein Denkmal* (2012) Beckmann provides an interplay between 'the real' and the crafted. Splicing photographs of tiles with fragments of the real stone tiles, Beckmann creates a collage of real and photographically reproduced surfaces that exist in complete harmony, yet are conceived by inherently different processes. While the stone may have taken years to form, its aesthetically esteemed surface can be reproduced as a virtually identical image in a matter of seconds. Yet, as swiftly as they are formed, the photographs can deteriorate. Another element of this work is a mirror. Inside the collage of both real and replicated surfaces the viewer is confronted with a replication of their own physical appearance. This duality of identical 'real' and replicated elements questions the values of material embodiment by highlighting aesthetic similarities.

In his *Fotoplastik* series (2011), Beckmann has created a portrait through a diverse range of processes which may not be easily interpreted, but have resulted in an ambiguous, yet striking image. While most photographs depict a likeness of a person through colours and shapes, these images depict the likeness of a person as formed by a projection upon the plaster cast of a face. The original subject is distorted by layers of replication. The processes evident within Beckmann's photographic pieces are what make them so unique and compelling. They are performative and sculptural, they depict actions and processes which are expertly constructed and performed in order to communicate with the end product, rather than simply compose an image.

In many works, Beckmann has maintained a reflexive aesthetic quality which enables it to operate within the context of commercial photography while still maintaining a critical ethos. In his series of photographs of nude and clothed figures *Vor dem selben Hintergrund* (2012), Beckmann has engaged a traditional style of portraiture with contemporary subjects. Depicting both nudes and clothed figures, the emphasis on the human form is one which echoes the tactics and clichés of the representations of the human form throughout art history. The background is used to unify the series, allowing the viewer to observe the individual characteristics of the subjects in a homogeneous environment. The backdrop and compositional considerations highlighting awareness of the crafted nature of the portrait, begging the question of how identity can be perceived or distorted through the contrivance of photography.

Beckmann's work communicates with the broader context of art history attuned with an awareness of the techniques and practices of photography, examining the implications of representation, originality and embodiment in a contemporary post-photographic era.  
*by Tara Heffernan*

### Bio

Based in Germany, Ilia Beckmann studied media publishing in Stuttgart Germany and attended classes at the Institute of Art History Cologne, and the Academy of Media Arts. He is currently studying photography at the University of Applied Science Dortmund in Germany and has recently completed an exchange program at Griffith University, Queensland College of Art, Australia.

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