

Mat Collishaw

The Grinders Cease

1 December 2018 — 26 January 2019

Private View:

Friday 30 November, 6-8pm

Blain|Southern Berlin
Potsdamer Straße 77-87
(Mercator Höfe)
10785 Berlin



Mat Collishaw, *Albion* 2017. Courtesy the artist and Blain|Southern
Photo: Peter Mallet

'In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened...'

(King James Bible, Ecclesiastes 12:3)

Blain|Southern is delighted to present *The Grinders Cease*, an exhibition by Mat Collishaw, his first with the gallery in Berlin. The exhibition testifies to the depth and breadth of Collishaw's practice, with new and recent works including installation, sculpture, photography and painting.

Collishaw is a key figure in an generation of contemporary British artists who came to prominence via the group show *Freeze* in 1988. He has never shied away from challenging subject matter, exploring ideas around death, destruction and decay. The artist is known for works that reference art history and create a contemporary dialogue with past masters. *The Grinders Cease* reflects his preoccupation with the vanitas theme, used since the Renaissance as a way of reminding viewers of the impermanence of worldly pleasures. The exhibition title is borrowed from the King James Bible, Book of Ecclesiastes, from which the Vanitas derives.

The exhibition opens with a new work from 2018, *Columbine*, which animates Albrecht Dürer's watercolour study *Columbine* from 1526. This wild plant is a multifaceted example of the transience of life, both in that it blooms only briefly and because the plant itself is poisonous.

The exhibition continues through three separate light-locked spaces. In the first, *Albion* takes as its subject the Major Oak in Sherwood Forest, England. This centuries-old mythical tree has a hollow rotten trunk, and since the Victorian era its vast limbs have been supported by an elaborate system of scaffolding. Collishaw's slowly rotating, almost life-size image of the oak is a ghost-like apparition generated by both cutting-edge laser scans and an antiquated technique of theatrical projection. Empty at its core, the image represents a living object which is trapped in perpetuity to present the illusion of life. The title also partly derives from the idealised concept of an ancient England that probably never existed.

Last Meal on Death Row, Texas is a series of photographs of meals requested by actual prisoners prior to execution. Presented in the manner of Flemish still life paintings they are a memento mori, a reminder of the inevitability of death and the impermanence of life on earth. Another series, the *Black Mirror* works, have another effect on the viewer: capturing single figures whose forms have been subtly animated to move behind a surveillance mirror framed in elaborate black Murano glass, the works reflect the viewer's image and thus draw a connection between the past and present.

The grand finale is provided by *Seria Ludo*, a 3D zoetrope sculpture. This kinetic optical illusion rotates at increasing velocity before strobe lights kick in and animate the scene, revealing a frenzied chaos of debauchery. 180 tiny figures can be seen carousing across the framework of the chandelier in a manic, drunken orgy. This is a party, but a desperate one, and when will it stop?

*'Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun,
than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry.'*

(King James Bible, Ecclesiastes 8:15)

Notes to Editors

The exhibition runs concurrent to Henning Strassburger *Kenny*.

About the artist

Mat Collishaw (b. 1966) is a key figure in an important generation of contemporary British artists. He began his career exhibiting the acclaimed work *Bullet Hole* at the legendary show *Freeze* in 1988. His broad practice includes sculpture, photography, film and installation, and his work has been exhibited in numerous solo shows around the world, including: *The Mask of Youth*, Royal Museums Greenwich, London, UK (2018); *Standing Water*, Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague, CZ (2018); *Thresholds*, Somerset House, London, UK and touring (2017-2018); *Mat Collishaw*, New Art Gallery Walsall, West Midlands, UK (2015); *Black Mirror*, Galleria Borghese, Rome, IT (2014); *Mat Collishaw: Afterimage*, Arter, Istanbul, TR (2013); *Mat Collishaw*, Bass Museum of Art, Florida, US (2013); *Retrospectre*, BFI Southbank, London, UK (2010); *Hysteria*, Freud Museum, London, UK (2009).

Collishaw's work is in numerous public and private collections including; Tate and British Council Collections, both London; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Arter Foundation, Istanbul; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; Museum of Old and New Art, New South Wales and Olbricht Collection, Berlin. The artist lives and works in London.

About Blain|Southern

Blain|Southern is a contemporary art gallery based in London and Berlin. The gallery represents an expanding roster of international artists and is the exclusive representative of the estates of Lynn Chadwick and Avigdor Arikha.

Recent exhibitions include Sean Scully, Ali Banisadr, *Doodle & Disegno*, Moshekwa Langa, Edward Kienholz, Frank Thiel, Liliane Tomasko, Wim Wenders, Marius Bercea, Rachel Howard, Michael Joo and Avigdor Arikha.

Gallery information

Blain|Southern
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10785 Berlin

Tuesday to Saturday: 11am - 6pm
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